FEATURES: CHINA, HONDURAS CHART A NEW COURSE P.30 | FEATURES: GEN Z SEEKS SACRED SOJOURN P.38

BEIJINGREVIEW

VOL.66 NO.25 JUNE 22, 2023

WWW.BJREVIEW.COM

A CULTURAL CLOSE-UP

How preserving the past helps shape the future

RMB6.00
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GBP1.20
CAD2.60
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JPY188

ISSN 1000-9140

9 771000 914239 25>

邮发代号2-922 · 国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2

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A News Weekly Magazine
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Published every Thursday by
CICG Center for Americas, 24 Baiwanzhuang Lu,
Beijing 100037, China
Overseas Distributor: China International Book Trading Corporation (Guoji Shudian), P. O. BOX 399,
Beijing 100044, China
Tel: 86-10-68413849, 1-416-497-8096 (Canada)
Fax: 86-10-68412166
E-mail: fp@mail.cibtc.com.cn
Website: http://www.cibtc.com
General Distributor for Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan:
Peace Book Co. Ltd.
17/Fl, Paramount Bldg, 12 Ka Yip St, Chai Wan, HK
Tel: 852-28046687 **Fax:** 852-28046409

Beijing Review (ISSN 1000-9140 USPS 2812) is distributed weekly in the United States for US$64.00 per year by Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080
News Postage Paid at South San Francisco, CA 94080
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Beijing Review*, Cypress Books, 360 Swift Avenue, Suite 48, South San Francisco, CA 94080

Cultural Contemplations

Over the past millennia, the Chinese nation has created an extraordinary civilization marked by intellectual, cultural and material progress. "If one does not learn about China from the continuity of its long history, there is no way for him or her to understand ancient, modern or future China," President Xi Jinping said while attending a recent meeting on cultural inheritance and development. In other words, to understand the present, and beyond, you have to know the past.

Xi elaborated on five prominent features of the Chinese civilization, which he referred to as "the only uninterrupted civilization in the world." Its continuity determines that the Chinese people must follow their own path. Its innovativeness determines the enterprising Chinese spirit. Its unity determines that the different ethnic cultures of the nation share an unbreakable bond. Its inclusiveness determines the harmonious coexistence of different religious beliefs in China, as well as the open-mindedness toward societies worldwide. Its peaceful nature determines that China will continue to pursue exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations rather than imposing its own values and political system onto others.

The material abundance we, as humanity, enjoy today is well beyond our ancestors' wildest imagination. At the same time, however, we are facing serious global problems, including a widening wealth gap and growing tension between humankind and nature. To solve these problems, we need to apply not only the contemporary knowledge and resources at our disposal, but also those the past has given us.

Traditional culture may contain numerous lessons that can help solve the tough issues of our time. For instance, traditional Chinese wisdom holds that human beings are an integral part of nature and should follow the laws of nature; not the other way around. The state should be governed by virtue, and those who hold positions of power and responsibility should first of all be people of integrity. And to make the world come together, one must always pursue the common good.

Against this backdrop, China reiterated the importance of carrying forward past wisdom and promoting inter-civilizational dialogue. If we take a closer look at how we got to where we are today, we can be more resourceful in paving the way for a brighter future. **BR**

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主管单位：中国外文出版发行事业局
主办单位：中国外文局美洲传播中心（北京周报社）
地址：北京市西城区百万庄大街24号 邮编：100037
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总编室电话：(010) 68996252 发行部电话：(010) 68310644
印刷：北京华联印刷有限公司
北京周报 英文版2023年 第25期 ISSN 1000-9140
国内统一连续出版物号：CN11-1576/G2 邮发代号：2-922
广告许可证0171号 北京市期刊登记证第733号
国内零售价：人民币6.00元

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IGNITING DREAMS

The flame of Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games, or Asiad, is lit at the archaeological ruins of Liangzhu City in Zhejiang Province on June 15, marking the 100-day countdown to the opening of the games.

The Asiad, scheduled to take place from September 23 to October 8, will see an estimated 12,000 athletes from all 45 national and regional Olympic committees in Asia compete in 483 medal events. E-sports and breakdancing will make their debut as official competition events.

XINHUA

A New Pitch

Players from two villages in Rongjiang County, Guizhou Province, compete in the county's Village Super League on June 10. The league is a soccer tournament organized and participated in by local soccer fans on the weekends between early May and late July. The most recent edition attracted 20 teams from nearby villages.

New Publications

The fourth volume of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* has recently been published in French, Russian, Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Japanese and traditional Chinese characters, according to a publisher statement issued on June 11.

The volume contains a compilation of 109 spoken and written works of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, from February 3, 2020 to May 10, 2022, along with 45 photographs taken since January 2020. It is divided into 21 sections by topic.

It records the practices of the Party Central Committee with Xi at its core in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and drastic changes unseen in a century, and in rallying and leading the whole Party and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in realizing the goal of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and embarking on a new journey to transform China into a modern socialist country in all respects, the statement said.

The work fully and systematically reflects the latest developments achieved by Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, the statement read.

The simplified Chinese and English editions of the book were published in July 2022.

Medical Insurance

National inspections of China's medical insurance funds last year have retrieved around 720 million yuan ($100.6 million), Xinhua News Agency quoted the National Healthcare Security Administration as saying on June 14.

The national operation inspected 48 medical institutions in 23 provincial-level regions, imposing fines of more than 145 million yuan ($20.3 million) on those with malpractices and violations, data from the administration showed.

Main problems include charging extra fees and engaging in excessive treatments, examinations and prescriptions of medication in violation of standard norms.

China is improving the world's largest network for basic healthcare security, which covers about 95 percent of the country's population of 1.4 billion, by enhancing the supervision of its funds.

During local inspections in 31 provincial-level regions in 2022, authorities penalized 2,413 medical institutions and recovered 1.98 billion yuan ($276.5 million) in medical insurance funds.

Public Education

China aims to establish a quality and balanced basic public education system by 2027, according to a new set of guidelines jointly released by the general offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, China's cabinet, Xinhua reported on June 13.

By 2035, China aims to become one of the world's leading countries in terms of the quality and equity of compulsory education services, the document said.

In the coming years, the authorities will work to close the education gap between developed and less-developed regions, with a focus on school facilities, and will continue to spend resources on less-developed regions in central and western China, according to the document.

The education gap between urban and rural areas, among different schools and different groups of residents, will also be addressed.

Priority will go to rural schools. The related authorities will work to ensure that all rural children of school age receive compulsory education, while more information technology will be introduced to improve the quality of education in rural schools.

The country will further adopt new policies and measures to help children of migrant workers attend school where their parents work.

The document pledges that the government will continue to increase the budget for education, particularly that for compulsory education.

Removing Toxic Chemicals

To date, China has eliminated 23 types of toxic chemicals listed among the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE), Xinhua reported on June 13.

The international community reached the global treaty in 2001 to reduce, remove and prevent pollution from POPs and to protect human health and the environment from the effects of POPs.

POPs are toxic chemicals that adversely affect human health and the environment around the world. They persist for long periods of time in the environment and can accumulate and pass from one species to the next through the food chain.

In a recently released regulation document, the MEE, together with other related authorities, detailed the prohibition on the production, use, import and export of five types of POPs, including polychlorinated naphthalene, according to a ministry official.

China attaches great importance to compliance with international conventions, has disposed of more than 100,000 tons of POP wastes and significantly reduced the intensity of dioxin emissions from major industries nationwide, the official said.

Consumption City

Tianjin Municipality in north China has released a five-year action plan to accelerate its efforts in transforming itself into an international consumption center city, Xinhua reported on June 11.

Per the plan, which is composed of 24 key tasks, Tianjin will become a destination for international consumption and domestic tourism in the next five years.

By 2025, Tianjin's annual total retail sales of consumer goods will exceed 500 billion yuan ($69.8 billion) and the city will record 300 million domestic and overseas tourist visits each year.

Tianjin will take a series of measures to achieve these goals, including constructing landmark business districts, holding international exhibition events, improving supporting facilities and providing quality services.

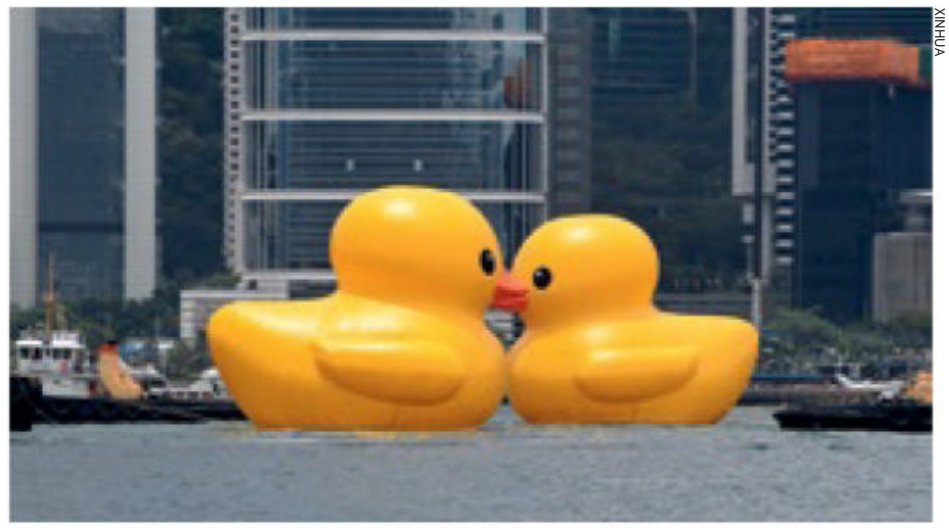
Urban Rail Trips

The number of passenger trips handled by China's urban rail transit networks soared 87 percent year on year in May, Xinhua reported on June 11.

A total of 2.49 billion passenger trips were made via China's urban transit networks in 54 cities last month, according to the Ministry of Transport.

The figure was 25.3 percent higher than the average monthly level in 2019, the data revealed.

By late May, China had 292 urban rail transit lines in operation, with a total length of 9,652.6 km, according to the ministry.



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Like a Duck to Water

A pair of giant yellow rubber ducks floats around Victoria Harbor in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on June 9. The iconic yellow rubber duck made its first appearance in Hong Kong 10 years ago when the installation by Dutch artist Florentijn Hofman drew enormous crowds to the famous harbor. For its encore, the yellow ducky brought a friend.

XINHUA

Cheers!

Participants indulge in a little winetasting at the Third China (Ningxia) International Wine Culture and Tourism Expo on June 9 in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China's leading wine-producing region.

The expo, along with the International Conference on Grape and Wine Industries, took place on June 9-10 and offered a platform for exploring new growth models for the wine-making industry and sharing new opportunities for international cooperation.

Cost Cutting

Sectors dedicated to technological innovation or key industrial chains will enjoy personalized tax and fee cuts, alongside a further optimization of current favorable tax policies, according to a circular issued on June 13 by four departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission.

By the end of this year, small-scale taxpayers with monthly sales of less than 100,000 yuan ($13,969) will be exempted from value-added tax, it said.

While seeking to lower loan interest rates, the country will also continue to increase loans to small and micro firms, according to the document.

To alleviate firms' labor burdens, the existing policies of lowering the premium rates for unemployment insurance and work-related injury insurance will be extended to late 2024.

The country will also retain a zero-tariff policy toward coal imports and make continued efforts to reduce institutional transaction costs and logistics costs, the circular added.

Reverse Repo Rate

The People's Bank of China (PBC), the country's central bank, lowered its seven-day reverse repurchase (known as reverse repo) rate from 2 percent to 1.9 percent on June 13 amid its efforts to step up countercyclical adjustment and shore up market expectations.

For example, in a slow economy, a countercyclical action would be meant to help encourage an upswing. It is a government effort implemented through taxes and different policies. A countercyclical policy can be applied to isolated situations or as an ongoing means of controlling the effect of business on the economy.

The PBC's latest move aims to keep liquidity reasonable and ample in the banking system, according to the bank.

A reverse repo is a process in which the central bank purchases securities from commercial banks through bidding, with an agreement to sell them back in the future.

This is the PBC's first such move since August last year.

It came amid the country's recent efforts to effectively reduce the cost of liabilities of its banks, encourage these institutions to better support the real economy and strengthen countercyclical adjustment, Zhou Maohua, an analyst with China Everbright Bank, said.

Power Battery Capacity

The installed capacity of power batteries in China saw rapid expansion in May amid the sound development of the new-energy vehicle (NEV) market, industry data showed.

During the period, the installed capacity of power batteries totaled 28.2 gigawatt-hours (GWh), up 52.1 percent year on year, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers revealed.

About 19.2 GWh of lithium iron phosphate batteries were installed in NEVs, surging 87.2 percent from a year earlier, and making up 67.8 percent of the monthly total.

In the first five months of this year, installed capacity of power batteries rose 43.5 percent year on year to 119.2 GWh, according to the association.

SMEs Development Index

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Development Index, based on a survey of 3,000 SMEs, edged down 0.1 point from the previous month to 88.9 in May, the latest industry data showed.

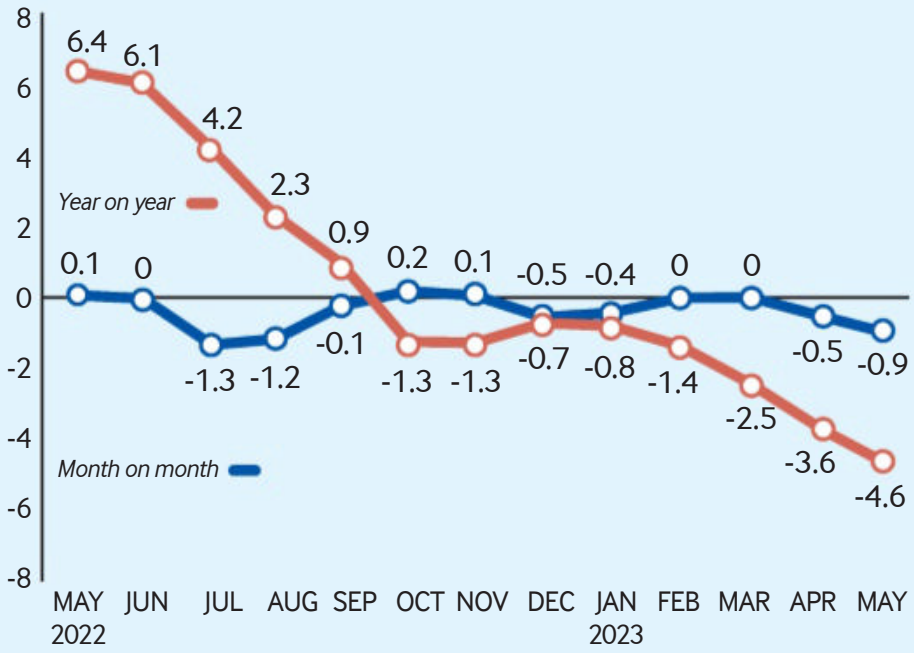
The vitality of a country's SMEs is an important indicator reflecting the country's economic performance.

This marked the third consecutive month of declines for

NUMBERS

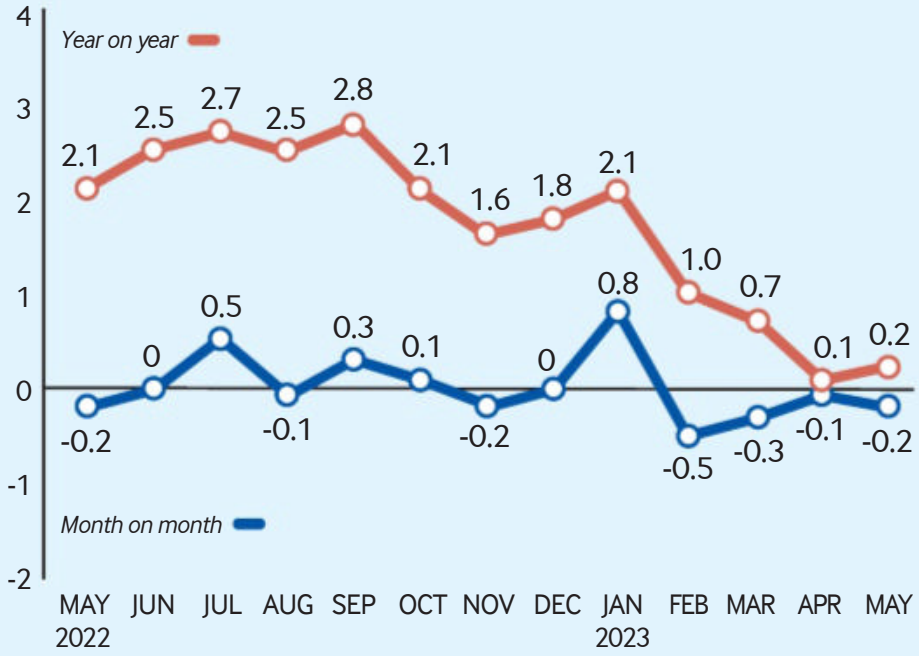
China's Producer Price Index Growth

(%)



China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) Growth

(%)



the gauge, but the drop in May was narrower compared with the 0.3-point decrease in April, the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises said.

The Chinese economy has sustained its recovery momentum, but its foundation remains weak, the association said, cautioning that uncertain and unpredictable factors are on the rise globally.

PV Exports

China's exports of photovoltaic (PV) products rose 18.9 percent year on year to $19.35 billion in the first four months of this year, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

From March to April, the PV industry saw a high operating rate, the ministry said.

In the March-April period, output of polysilicon increased 72.1 percent year on year, while that of silicon wafers rose 79.8 percent, according to the ministry.

Reinsurance International Board

An international board for reinsurance trading was launched in Shanghai on June 8, along with the rollout of implementation rules for transforming the city into a global reinsurance center. Reinsurance is a form of insurance purchased by insurance companies in order to mitigate risks.

The rules mark an important step toward the construction of a global reinsurance center in Shanghai.

The rules detail 22 policy measures, focusing on areas such as improving the infrastructure and institutional system of the reinsurance market, enhancing the supply and innovation of products, and promoting the sector's high-level institutional opening up.

Measures will be taken to facilitate the cross-border settlement of domestic reinsurance payments, reduce cross-border transaction costs and shorten the settlement cycle.

According to the rules, the country will intensify participation in global reinsurance industry cooperation and provide Chinese solutions for global risk protection and financial governance systems.

Green Loans and Bonds

China has established a multi-tiered green finance market system, with outstanding green loans and bonds both ranking among the top globally, according to the country's central bank.

Green finance is any structured financial activity that's been created to ensure a better environmental outcome.

As of the end of the first quarter this year, the country's outstanding green loans in yuan and foreign currencies exceeded 25 trillion yuan ($3.5 trillion), while its outstanding green bonds surpassed 1.5 trillion yuan ($209.5 billion), PBC data showed.

Yi Gang, Governor of the PBC, emphasized the important role of green finance, saying the country's carbon peaking and neutrality goals, set to be achieved before 2030 and 2060, respectively, will generate great change, including in energy structure and people's overall lifestyles.

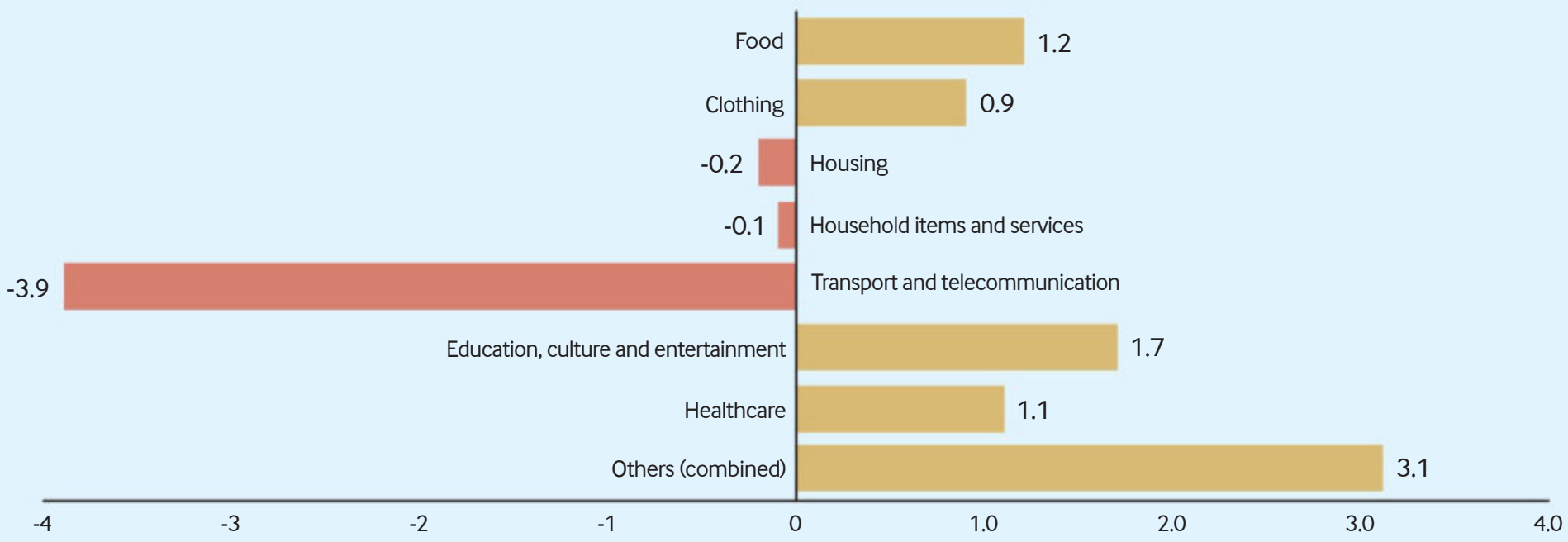
In recent years, the PBC has doubled down on efforts to develop green finance and those measures have produced positive results, Yi added.

The central bank has specified environmental information disclosure requirements for financial institutions, rolled out supporting tools for carbon reduction and the clean and efficient use of coal, and built up the climate risk management capacities of financial institutions, according to Yi.

By late April, China's carbon reduction credit facility had financed more than 150 million tons in carbon emission cuts, PBC data revealed.

China's CPI Growth by Type

May (% y.o.y.)



(Source: *National Bureau of Statistics*)

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Thousands of fishermen gather near the parliamentary building in Seoul on June 12 to protest against Japan's planned discharge of radioactive wastewater from its crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean

LEBANON

A woman eats cherries at the Hammana Cherry Festival in the village of Hammana, Mount Lebanon Governorate on June 11. The village is known for its cherries and hosts an annual cherry festival between the end of May and mid-June

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NEW ZEALAND

A man drives a tractor at Fieldays, the Southern Hemisphere's biggest agricultural event, at Mystery Creek, Hamilton, on June 17

UNITED NATIONS

Secretary General António Guterres speaks at a press conference at the UN headquarters in New York on June 12. He expressed support for establishing an artificial intelligence watchdog body akin to the International Atomic Energy Agency

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TANZANIA

A fisherman gets ready for work at Lake Victoria, Mwanza Region, on June 10. Lake Victoria is the largest freshwater lake in Africa and is an essential source of food and income for local residents

TÜRKIYE

The Manchester City team celebrates with the trophy after winning the Champions League Final of the Union of European Football Associations at Istanbul's Ataturk Olympic Stadium on June 10

TENNIS PLAYERS WIN FRENCH OPEN DOUBLES TITLE

Wang Xinyu and Hsieh Su-wei won the women's doubles final at the French Open in Paris, France, on June 11, defeating the No.10 seed pair of Taylor Townsend of the U.S. and Leylah Fernandez of Canada.

Wang, 22, grew up in an athletic family in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province. Wang Peng, her father, a former coach of Team China, began teaching her how to play tennis when she was 6, after which she gradually transitioned to professional training. In 2018, she began playing professionally.

The doubles title in France makes Wang the seventh player from the Chinese mainland to win a women's title in a Grand Slam tournament. This is Wang's first and Hsieh's fifth Grand Slam title. Hsieh, 37, is from Taiwan, China.

When the Virtual Becomes Reality

Economic Daily
June 9

At an event on June 5, Apple unveiled Apple Vision Pro, a mixed reality headset that promises a blend of digital content with physical reality. With further integrations with Microsoft Office software, it can become a workspace without the need for desks, computers and other physical office facilities. Tim Cook, Apple's CEO, said the device is "years ahead and unlike anything created before."

With artificial intelligence continuing to make headway, virtual reality is likely to break new ground at a faster pace as artificial intelligence can lower the threshold and improve the efficiency of virtual content creation. Apple's venture into the mixed reality headset business is likely to give it a shot in the arm.

However, nausea, dizziness and a number of other physical discomforts are common with users of virtual reality or mixed reality headsets. Meta, Google and Microsoft have launched similar products before, but none have become popular in the market. Whether Apple's new invention will offer a better user experience remains to be seen.

Everyone Loves a Panda

China Newsweek
June 5

With their black-and-white coat and roly-poly shape, giant pandas have long been considered a national treasure in China and are adored by people from all over the world. In an increasingly digitized age, zoos are no longer the only places where people can closely observe pandas. Now, people can simply pick up their phones and click into panda-themed webcam channels to watch the 24/7 live coverage of the animals' daily activities.

The two earliest and most well-known panda cams are iPanda, a

"We should spare no effort to ensure that the people of the world are the main actor, promoter and beneficiary of the cause of human rights."

Saint Cyr Mazangue, a diplomat from the Central African Republic, during the Forum on Global Human Rights Governance, which took place in Beijing on June 14-15

"Alone we go fast, but together we go further."

Marcelin Sanou, who works for the Great Green Wall, a tree-planting project led by the African Union, calling for international cooperation in combating desertification at the recent Taklimakan Desert Forum in Korla, Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

multimedia platform coestablished by China Network Television and the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Sichuan Province in 2013, and Pandapia, a program launched in 2014 that aims to document the birth and growth of every newborn panda at the research base in Chengdu. With no voiceovers, special effects or any other trace of human interference, these live broadcasts have provided panda lovers with a rich vault of raw materials, which can then be edited into fan-made videos and memes.

Part of the reason why these live-streams are so popular is that pandas remind people of themselves. A mother panda's love for her cubs reminds people of their own parents. Videos of baby pandas courageously scaling impressively tall trees and finally making it to the top after countless falls are a great source of strength for those who feel trapped and need a breakthrough.

The animal is such a popular symbol of China that it has served as a prototype for creative logo designs, such as Bing Dwen Dwen, a cuddly mascot of the Olympic Winter Games Beijing 2022. Renowned for its resilience and non-aggressiveness, the giant panda is an enduring Chinese icon of peace and friendship.

Student Vendors

Eastday.com

June 9

This summer, a new type of street stall has emerged alongside the sidewalk carts selling street food and fresh summer drinks. Run by college students mostly majoring in philosophy and psychology, these stalls offer a wide range of paid social services—anything from counseling, therapy sessions, psychology tests and deep philosophical discussions to casual chats—to anyone who needs someone to talk to.

Many people remain skeptical as to whether these unseasoned youngsters are qualified to provide counseling. What these people overlook is that college youth can often come up with fresh perspectives and creative interpretations unrestricted by the rules and regulations of a workplace. These stalls also allow college students to engage with all kinds of people and therefore prepare them for an entry into the real world.

Of course, like many other innovative undertakings that have arisen among college students, setting up curbside chat services is no easy task. Challenges abound, failure is constant. So instead of being overly critical of their inadequacy, people should give these students a bit more credit and encouragement.

CELEBRATED ARTIST DIES AT 99

Huang Yongyu, one of the most productive and influential artists in the second half of the 20th century in China, died on June 13 at the age of 99.

Huang was most famous for designing the first Chinese zodiac postal stamp for China, known as the Monkey Stamp, in 1980. In January, he once again showcased his creativity by designing a blue rabbit zodiac stamp. His design is now highly prized by collectors.

Born into a poor family in Changde, Hunan Province, in 1924, Huang started to earn a living at the age of 12 as an apprentice in a porcelain workshop. Swiftly realizing his talent, he began publishing woodblock prints at 14.

Huang was a member of the China National Academy of Painting and a professor at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

"By reducing tariff barriers among the 15 member states and abiding by unified provisions in the field of investment and trade, the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) will facilitate regional economic and trade development."

Masahiro Morinaga, Chief Delegate of the Japan External Trade Organization's Chengdu office, as the RCEP, the world's largest free trade pact, came into effect in all its members on June 2

"I think leaving home and studying in a new place can help us mature as people."

Tsering Dargye, a high school student from Tibet Autonomous Region studying in Beijing, speaking about his experience in an interview after he became the only one among some 10,000 people who wrote to China's space station crew and received a reply

COVER STORY

FOSTERING CULTURAL PROSPERITY

The importance of building cultural strength and developing a modern Chinese civilization By Ji Jing

COURTESY PHOTO

A microgarden with plants and an installation of birds and cages on Chongyong Street in Beijing in June 2022. The hobby of keeping songbirds is a famous tradition in the capital city

Hou Xiaolei, a professor at the School of Architecture of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, has found an innovative way of bringing new life to the *hutong*s, the city's ancient alleyways. Since 2015, she has led a microgarden project to build tiny gardens in *hutong*s, usually along the sides of the narrow alleys. The project was carried out as Beijing's urban renewal entered a phase where massive demolition and reconstruction gave way to small-scale "regeneration" projects.

"We hope to bring art into ordinary people's lives through the project and upgrade the public spaces of Beijing's old city, increase residents' participation in community governance and contribute to the improvement of the city's environment and culture," Hou told *Beijing Review*. Along one section of Chongyong Street, a historically significant thoroughfare in central Beijing, Hou and her team have built 35 microgardens consisting of more than 6,000 plants.

In addition to plants, the gardens also have art installations featuring elements of Beijing's local culture such as kites and *tanghulu*, a traditional candied fruit snack.

Hou told *Beijing Review* the microgardens have not only increased the greenery of the old street but also provided leisure spaces.

Hutong alleyways crisscross downtown Beijing. Building on the success of the project, Hou and her team continue to promote microgardens and engage local residents in creating and caring for them.

Hou's team has set up gardening organizations in some residential communities to teach local residents how to garden. They have also distributed brochures on microgardens, packages of seeds and tools to residents, encouraging them to grow their own ones.

Hou said the project is an innovative way to revive the old *hutong*s with creative horticulture and will contribute to the overall protection of Beijing's old city, which has one of the world's most remarkable collections of palaces, temples, squares, markets, streets, city walls and towers, built over the course of China's last three imperial dynasties. This project reflects the increasing importance attached to cultural heritage protection in recent years.

Preserving traditional culture

The central authorities have attached greater importance to cultural inheritance and development since Xi Jinping took helm as general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012.

The first guidelines of the central authorities on preserving and developing outstanding traditional culture were released in January 2017.

In April 2021, China unveiled cultural initiatives for the 14th▶▶

Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period that were key parts of national strategies to carry on cultural traditions. The dynamic, open-ended list of initiatives includes a project to identify and categorize cultural resources, as well as projects for the protection and promotion of Yellow River culture and traditional Chinese medicine.

Under the project to identify cultural resources, a tiered system of intangible cultural heritage has been established, spanning the national, provincial, municipal and county levels.

More than 100,000 items of intangible cultural heritage have been registered in the system, including 1,372 at the national level. More than 3,000 individuals have been identified as representative inheritors of intangible cultural heritage.

Innovative efforts have been made to not just inherit but also develop traditional culture. Traditional Chinese culture has revealed its abiding charm and taken on new appeal in China in recent years. The protection of *thangka* art, a traditional Tibetan painting on cotton or silk with at least 1,500 years of history, represents one of the endeavors to rescue and protect cultural heritage in China. *Thangka*s are popular among ethnic groups who believe in Tibetan Buddhism, such as Tibetans, Mongolians and the Qiang, and who reside in regions such as Tibet Autonomous Region, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. It's an important way to portray and spread Tibetan Buddhism and reflects the spiritual and social life of Tibetans. However, years ago, the art form was in urgent need of protection as fewer artists were learning the skills to produce it, some works of high artistic and historical value were being sold abroad illegally and such works in some temples were damaged due to a lack of protection awareness.

XINHUA

Zhang Juntao (left), an inheritor of the skill of making colorful lanterns, a piece of national intangible cultural heritage, introduces his works to students at a primary school in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, on June 8

In 2013, the Chinese Folk Literature and Art Association (CFLAA) launched the Chinese Thangka Culture Archive project to undertake a field study into the history and artistic characteristics of the art form and record the results through written documentation, audio recording, photography and videography.

Under the project, Feng Li, Executive Editor of the bimonthly *Folk Culture Forum* magazine affiliated with the CFLAA, has led a team to carry out surveys on *thangka* art in Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan. She told *Beijing Review* that as of December 2020, the project had finished surveys in places including Tibet's Lhasa, Chamdo and Xigaze, and Qinghai's Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, having collected more than 10 million characters of written documents and taken more than 50,000 photos. These findings will help protect, study and spread *thangka* culture.

Chinese people's identification with and confidence in their own culture have improved in recent years and traditional culture is thriving through innovation. Many traditional culture-related TV programs and products are attracting strong followings. One of these is cultural TV program *National Treasure*, produced by state broadcaster China Central Television. *National Treasure* was launched in 2017 and tells the stories and history behind Chinese cultural relics from its national key museums such as the Palace Museum inside the Forbidden City in Beijing.

Creative cultural products produced and sold by museums have also surged in popularity, with their sales constantly breaking new records. For instance, in recent years, important archaeological discoveries from the Sanxingdui Ruins site in Guanghan, southwest China's Sichuan Province, have driven the design and sale of products by the site's museum. According to the museum, sales of its creative cultural products reached 20 million yuan ($2.8 million) last year and 15 million yuan ($2.1 million) in the first quarter of this year.

Young Chinese consumers have an increasing preference for products that not only are infused with traditional cultural elements but also cater to modern tastes. Under the trend known as *guochao*, which means "native wave," fashionable products of all kinds have been created.

The *guochao* trend is gaining popularity among Gen Z, according to a report released by the JD Consumption and Industry Development Research Institute in April last year.

Gao Peng, an associate professor of the School of Art Design at Communication University of Shanxi, told *Economic Daily* that in recent years, as the government has attached

more importance to preserving and passing down traditional culture, young consumers have taken more pride in traditional culture, which is why sales of *guochao* products have surged.

Building up cultural strength

President Xi Jinping underlined the need to firm up the Chinese people's confidence in their history and culture at a symposium on cultural inheritance and development on June 2.

Xi emphasized that the Chinese civilization has a long and continuous history, and said that a comprehensive and profound understanding of that history is essential to more effectively promote the creative transformation and development of outstanding traditional Chinese culture.

"These five prominent features point the way forward for the advancement of the modern Chinese civilization," Wang Bo, Vice President of Peking University, told Xinhua News Agency.

Days after the symposium, the First Forum on Building Up China's Cultural Strength took place in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province on June 7-8. The forum, hosted by the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, had the theme of Toward Greater Cultural Confidence and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations. Officials, scholars and representatives from enterprises and public institutions in the cultural sector attended the forum and offered their ideas on how to build up China's cultural strength.

Eight sub-forums discussed topics including cultural heritage protection and art and literature development.

At the sub-forum on cultural heritage protection, Wang Wei, Director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Academic Division of History, outlined the achievements of a project tracing the origins of Chinese civilization, launched in the early 2000s. He is one of the project's chief experts.

The project is a multidisciplinary scientific research project supported by the state. About 400 experts, majoring in nearly 20 disciplines, from more than 70 research and development institutions in China and abroad have participated in the project. It is the largest-scale comprehensive research project on ancient civilization, as well as the one with the most disciplines and scientific technology involved ever undertaken in China.

The new archaeological discoveries made under the project have provided valuable new insights that further demonstrate how the Chinese civilization has more than 5,000 years of history.

"The large number of archaeological discoveries demonstrate the continuity of the Chinese civilization and show its richness," Wang Wei said.

And because of that continuity, this civilization reflects the continuous process of human social development to some extent, he said.

At the forum, Wang Xudong, Director of the Palace Museum inside Beijing's Forbidden City, China's former imperial palace from 1420 to 1911, emphasized the importance of preserving cultural heritage in building up cultural strength.

He said cultural heritage is nonrenewable and cannot be replaced, and stressed that protecting cultural heritage is preserving the spiritual roots of the Chinese nation.

Developing a modern civilization

Scholars also expressed their ideas on the relationship between Chinese civilization and modernization at the forum.

Chen Lai, Director of the Tsinghua Academy of Chinese Learning, said at the forum that China's great achievements since the country's reform and opening up in the late 1970s are closely related to traditional Chinese culture.

Chen said some outside China consider the concepts of Confucian culture and modernization to be contradictory, but that's not true. The rapid economic growth of Japan and the "Four Asian Tigers"—China's Hong Kong and Taiwan, Singapore and the Republic of Korea—since the 1950s showed that Confucianism and modernization are not contradictory.

The ethics of contemporary Chinese economic activities such as hard work, economy, honesty and a willingness to learn are all typical of Confucian culture. Therefore China's rapid economic growth in the past decades should be attributed not only to Chinese people's hard work and creativity but also to traditional Chinese culture.

Zheng Yongnian, a researcher with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), said although modernity as a set of values was formed in the West from the Renaissance to the Age of Enlightenment, this does not mean that the set of values belongs solely to the West. In fact, the West has also absorbed and incorporated many values and technology from other civilizations and cultures, particularly the Chinese civilization and culture. For instance, the West's application of China's technological inventions, especially the four great inventions—the compass, printing, papermaking and gun powder—laid a solid foundation for its modernization.

China's modernization is very different from that of other countries, as its modernization is based on its own traditions and circumstances, rather than the models of the West.

It is the pluralism of modernization that should be respected today. Different civilizations not only have different understandings of the meaning of modernization, but also different ways of pursuing modernization. Only when a country's modernization conforms to its own civilization, culture and national conditions can it succeed.

China's emphasis on pursuing its own path to modernization means that it will not impose its model of modernization upon other parties, as some Western countries do. Instead, it advocates dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations to jointly advance the modernization of the world by seeking common development along different paths. **BR**

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People take in the 3D display of movable-type printing at the 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, on June 8

COVER STORY

A MAGNETIC MOSAIC

An exhibition sheds light on the latest happenings in cultural industries

By Yuan Yuan

Anticipation ran high as Iranian businessman Mahdi Baridolyaei finally arrived in Shenzhen, Guangdong Province, for the offline edition of the 19th China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair (ICIF) which took place in the southern Chinese tech hub from June 7 to 11. In the previous three years, he'd only been able to attend the event online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cultural industries, which include arts and crafts, design, entertainment, architecture, media and so on, have become a vital force in accelerating human development. They empower people to take ownership of their development and stimulate innovation that can drive inclusive and sustainable growth.

Hosted in Shenzhen every year since 2004, the ICIF has become one of the country's leading cultural fairs as well as an important platform for cultural exchanges among a growing number of participating countries.

Baridolyaei had his booth inside the Belt and Road International Pavilion. The pavilion debuted at the 11th ICIF in 2015, two years after Chinese President Xi Jinping announced the Belt and Road Initiative, a China-proposed initiative that aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. From 2020 to 2022, the pavilion was closed due to the pandemic; it came back stronger than ever this year.

On the occasion of the BRI's 10th anniversary this year, the pavilion presented the achievements of cultural cooperation among the initiative's participating countries and regions.

Baridolyaei joined the offline ICIF for the first time in 2019. He studied standard Chinese at the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and is well-versed in the language. He was happy to be at the fair in person once again this June and brought with him very different products, all originating in Iran: saffron—given Iran produces 85 percent of the world's saffron, Persian carpets—given the country is renowned for its centuries-old carpet weaving tradition, and an assortment of other typical handicrafts including ceramics and mosaic works.

"I can see the market is recovering after the pandemic and this kind of exhibition is bringing more cultural exchanges and enables us to engage in business activities," he told *Chongqing Daily*.

A promotional patchwork

The event resumed in full swing. The main venue, the Shenzhen World Exhibition and Convention Center, which covers 120,000 square meters—roughly the size of 17 soccer fields, featured six exhibition halls themed on digital culture, cultural industries, cultural development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao

Greater Bay Area, cultural and tourism consumption, and intangible cultural heritage.

More than 60 sub-venues scattered across the city hosted supporting events of the expo, including forums, conferences, contract signing ceremonies and creative competitions.

The ICIF's organizing committee revealed that the number of overseas exhibitors and visitors had returned to pre-COVID levels this year.

For the 14th consecutive year, all of the Chinese mainland's 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities plus Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and Taiwan Province participated in the fair.

This was the ninth year Wei Suying from Guangdong Province joined the event as an exhibitor. As the founder of a company producing daily necessities, she told *Guangzhou Daily* that over the years, her company has explored ways to standardize, brand and mass produce products made with several intangible cultural heritage techniques native to the province and has managed to gain some of them international recognition.

Wei considered each edition of the ICIF a great stage for displaying products related to intangible cultural heritage and a solid channel for the intangible products to travel to both the domestic and international markets. "It connects global cultural and creative resources, and also provides market outlets for cultural goods and services," she said. "It also helps to foster people's awareness, especially among younger generations, of the importance of preserving and inheriting these techniques."

Anne-Marie Sargueil, President of the Paris-based French Institute of Design, in an interview with *Shenzhen Daily* hailed the tech hub for its booming reputation in the international design world and said she felt "a lot of energy for creativity at the fair."

Sargueil was there in the European Cultural and Creative Pavilion, which debuted at the Belt and Road International Exhibition Pavilion this year, showcasing the artworks of French designers, digital art from Belgium and a range of other international creative designs.

She believes design can serve as a cultural bridge. As the year 2024 will mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between France and China, Sargueil plans to launch a Sino-French design award competition in Shenzhen next year, hoping to "strengthen exchanges and cooperation in the field of cultural industries between the two countries."

New kids on the block

The latest technological innovations in cultural industries were another highlight of the fair. Many pavilions turned to hi-tech, including virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI), to showcase their cultural products.

The Digital China booth was a new kid on the block, presenting how China's digital technology achievements are applied in various fields. The booth even brought back to life cultural relics and ancient paintings using up-to-the-minute technologies.

Cultural enterprises well-versed in 5G, big data, cloud computing, AI and other technological applications, displayed their latest endeavors in breaking new ground using these technologies.

LAIPIC, a company based in Shenzhen, is a regular participant of the event. Dedicated to merging the use of AI with cultural products, it has produced many products for the expo, including hyper-realistic digital human avatars. "I think domestic AI technology will develop quickly and be used on a large scale [in China]," Gao Wangwei, Commercial Director of LAIPIC, told *Chongqing Daily*.

Those who couldn't attend this edition of the ICIF in person were able to join its online version powered by VR panoramic technology on the event's official website. The technology uses panoramic production software to stitch together dozens of visual images from different angles and finally creates a full-coverage 3D panorama.

And then there were the event's daily live-streams. This year, for the first time, the ICIF had recruited influencers to capture the event's every happening live on camera and stream it to audiences worldwide. It also introduced 10 AI digital humans that served as live-stream hosts for five consecutive days.

Chen Lusheng, a researcher with the National Museum of China, was invited to create a live-stream at the hall for intangible cultural heritage. "Live-streaming is a good way to promote the ICIF and similar events, and we've received some very good responses," he told *Shenzhen Special Zone Daily*. "The introduction of new technologies, too, has helped to expand the ICIF's influence beyond the limits of time and space." **BR**

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COVER STORY

RECORDING GLAMour

New national archives enable the public to delve into more than 5,000 years of history and culture

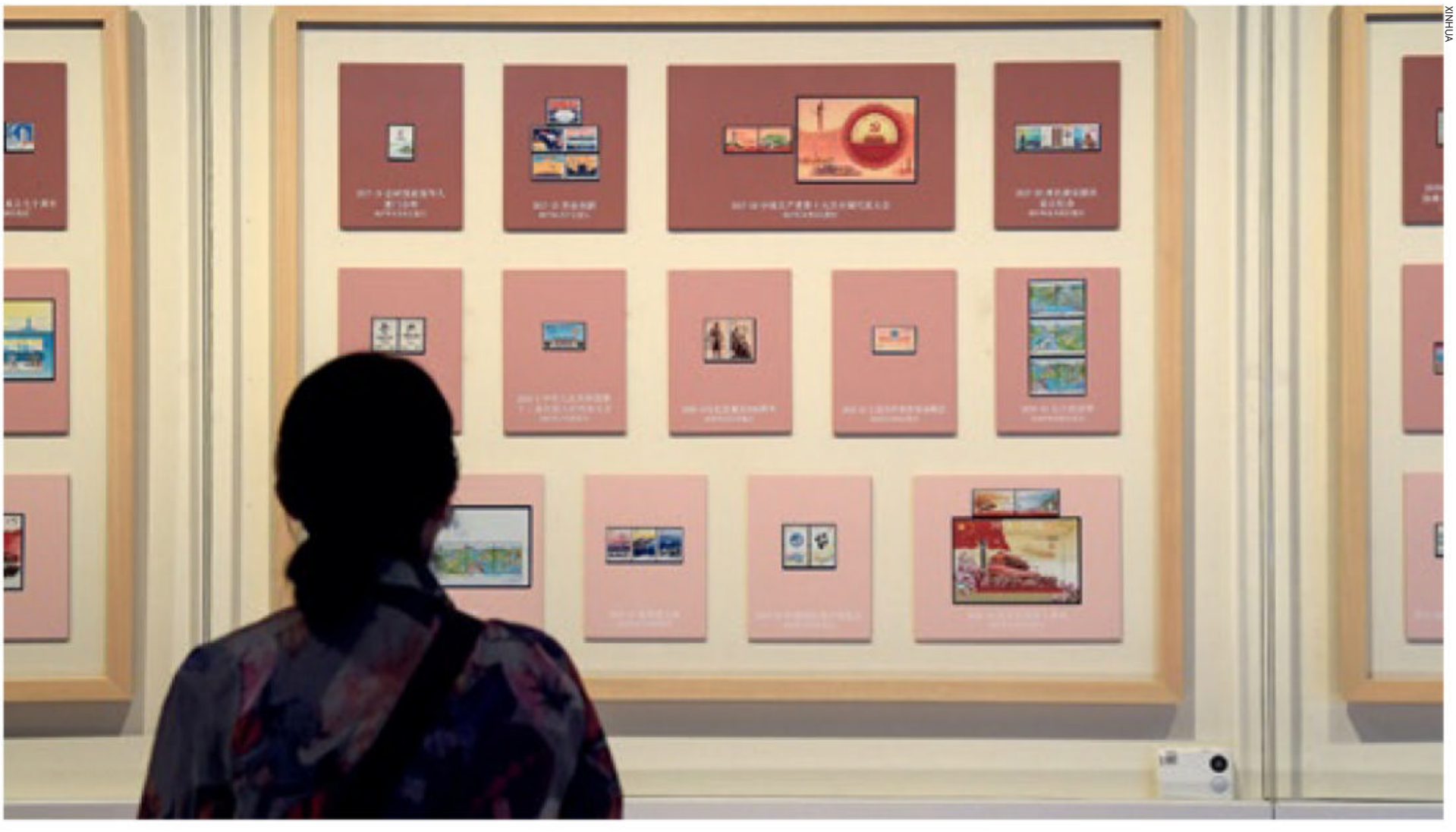
By Lu Yan

The baffling variety of the vast collection found at the National Archives of Publications and Culture (NAPC) might pleasantly surprise visitors—classics from thousands of years ago, newspapers and magazines published before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, yellowing packages of different cigarette brands, cassette tapes from the 1980s when pop music started to thrive on the Chinese mainland and DVDs of foreign films like the 1939 Hollywood blockbuster *Gone With the Wind*… Their diversity records and carries on China's traditional culture and communication with others.

Rather than a museum, a library, an exhibition center or a gallery, the NAPC is something much more, something that cannot be pinned down by one category. Preserving all kinds of literature and art resources embedded with historical and cultural value, the archives serve as a collection, exhibition, database and an overall haven of cultural communication.

"The archives are created in line with current international GLAM (an acronym for galleries, libraries, archives and museums) concepts and are part of an innovative cultural project that builds a comprehensive cultural venue integrating a range of functions and demonstrating Chinese insights," NAPC Curator Liu Chengyong told China News Service, adding that the institution is referred to as "a gene bank for the seeds of Chinese civilization."

Liu said the NAPC plays an important role in continuing the line of Chinese culture, strengthening the public sense of cultural confidence,



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A visitor looks at a stamp exhibit at the headquarters of the National Archives of Publications and Culture in Beijing on July 30, 2022

displaying China's national image and promoting communications among civilizations. "It will become a new cultural landmark of the country," he added.

XINHUA

Visitors take photos of an ancient text at the Hangzhou branch of the National Archives of Publications and Culture in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, on July 30, 2022

An amazing collection

Following three years of construction, the NAPC was inaugurated in July last year. The institution comprises the Beijing headquarters and three branches in Shaanxi Province's Xi'an, Zhejiang Province's Hangzhou and Guangzhou in Guangdong Province. The locations were chosen based on their prominent place in Chinese history.

Beijing HQ is home to more than 16 million copies and editions of various publications, as well as inscribed bronzeware. The collection generally embraces 10 categories, including texts created with the woodblock printing technique, stamps, books that are thousands of years old, documents related to Chinese revolutionary history, religious literature, Chinese editions of foreign classics, and so on.

Visitors have a host of exhibitions showcasing different aspects of the Chinese civilization to choose from. For example, an exhibition titled the History of Chinese Currency presents and explains in detail the evolving history of money in China. From the earliest cowrie shell coins, the metallic currency during the Qin (221-206 B.C.) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, and the world's earliest paper currency used in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), to the first set of renminbi notes released in 1948 and the latest digital renminbi.

The three branches assume the responsibility of preserving all kinds of literature, art and other resources of important historical and cultural value mainly according to their locations—the Xi'an branch focuses on the culture in the country's western region, displaying cultural heritage items along the ancient Silk Road; the Guangzhou branch on the Lingnan culture found in the southern provinces of Guangdong and Hainan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, covering iconic heritage such as Cantonese Opera; and the Hangzhou one on the Jiangnan culture, which prevails in the region south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

More than 10,580 book, newspaper and magazine publishers, as well as numerous folk art collectors from all over China, have conducted surveys on ancient literature, art and other resources and contributed their archives from different periods. As of now, the national archives have altogether collected over 25 million items.

"The exhibition helps me gain a deeper understanding of our history from different aspects," Wang Jiaxi, a college student in Hangzhou, told *Beijing Review* on her recent trip to the NAPC's branch there. "I was shocked by the perfect combination of ancient and modern—in terms of the technologies the exhibition applies as well as the architecture and interior design."

The QR codes accompanying each item on display also impressed Wang. By scanning them with a smartphone, visitors can learn the detailed stories behind the exhibits. The archives have also turned to hi-tech, such as augmented reality and glasses-free 3D displays, to improve the overall visitor experience.

Communication is key

As a platform for communication, the NAPC also hosts public seminars. For example, in August last year, Wang Shu, designer of its Hangzhou branch and the first Chinese national to win the Pritzker Architecture Prize, the world's most prestigious architecture award, shared with audiences the branch's design concept and construction process.

The location used to be an abandoned mine in the suburbs of Hangzhou, which served as China's capital for more than 140 years during the 12th and 13th centuries and was one of the richest and most developed places in the world at that time. Wang recreated the Song Dynasty's painted screens in his design for the project and incorporated depictions of mountains and rivers, typical elements in ancient Chinese paintings, and turned the whole complex into a modern-day Song-style structure.

Moreover, the NAPC caters to the needs of international visitors and plans to host international cultural events. "It will also strengthen exchanges and cooperation with world-renowned libraries, museums and art galleries, as well as establish bilateral and multilateral exchange and cooperation mechanisms to promote cultural exchange and dialogue among civilizations," Liu said, adding that the institute welcomes experts and scholars engaged in archival research from all over the world, Sinologists and young cultural ambassadors in particular, to conduct field exchanges and jointly carry out research on cutting-edge archival topics.

"It can serve as a bridge for exchange and mutual learning between China and the rest of the world, and open a window for the world to understand China and for China to understand the world," Liu concluded. **BR**

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COVER STORY

DELIGHTS FROM INK AND BRUSH

The origins of traditional Chinese painting can be traced back to the Neolithic period thousands of years ago when humans began to create primitive symbols and drawings. It has since evolved into a way to express ideas and emotions through the exquisite use of brushes soaked with ink. A newly launched exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing showcases landscape paintings from the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911). The exhibition paints a picture of how the ancient Chinese observed life and understood the world. **BR**

(Text and photos by Wei Yao)

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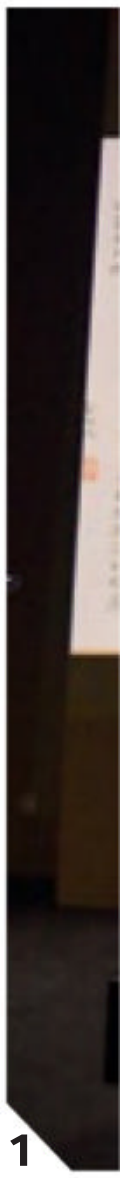

1. A digitally rendered painting on show at the National Museum of China in Beijing on June 13. The integration of calligraphy and imagery is a hallmark of Chinese literati painting, a genre that has its roots in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)

2. Works on display at the exhibition, which is titled Traditional Chinese Landscape Paintings of the Ming and Qing Dynasties—Traveling Through Mountains and Waters

3. A work by Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) painter Wang Fu depicts the mountain scenery around Beijing

4. A painting by Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) artist Zhang Yin reproduces an idyllic scene in the early 19th century

2

THROUGH THEIR EYES

People from around the world take you on a journey to rediscover China

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Time for Brazil to Join the Initiative

By Tiago Nogara

Since Chinese President Xi Jinping first proposed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, in 2013, its scope and geographical reach have grown considerably. While the initiative's first land and maritime economic corridors geographically focused on Eurasia and part of the East African coast, its projects have expanded to include other regions, including Latin America and the Caribbean. On June 2, for example, China and Argentina signed a plan in Beijing to jointly promote Belt and Road cooperation.

More than 20 Latin American and Caribbean countries have officially joined the BRI, but even though recent decades have marked China's rise as Brazil's main economic partner in terms of trade, investment and finance, Brazil as of yet has not. However, an analysis of the main benefits of implementing the BRI in Latin America and the history of bilateral relations demonstrates that Brazil's entry is not only natural but also essential.

Strategic partners

The relationship with Brazil has a special significance for China in Latin America. In recent years, the South American country has proven to be one of China's main comprehensive partners in launching multilateral initiatives in the global environment. Brazil is the only Latin American founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, a China-initiated multilateral financial institution to promote sustainable infrastructure and support countries that are striving to meet environmental and development goals. Both countries are members of the BRICS, a group of emerging market economies that also comprises Russia, India and South Africa. Former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff recently became president of the New Development Bank, an international financial institution established as a joint initiative among BRICS countries.

The ties between the peoples of Brazil and China go back to 1814, when Chinese tea planters were sent from Portugal to the Royal Botanical Garden in Rio de Janeiro. Today, Brazil is home to 40,000 Chinese citizens and 200,000 people of Chinese ancestry. And since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1974, several successful initiatives have set the tone for bilateral relations, such as the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite program, signed in 1988; the establishment of the strategic partnership in 1993, the first with this nomenclature recognized by the Chinese Government in the developing world; and the elevation of relations to the level of comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012.

Since the swearing-in of Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in January, expectations are high for further bilateral engagement. During previous Lula administrations (2003-10), the two countries welcomed several joint initiatives, including the establishment of the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Commission for Consultation and Cooperation and the China-Brazil Business Council. Lula's visit to China in April saw the signing of 15 bilateral governmental agreements and another 20 commercial contracts between companies and public agencies.

But despite this growing synergy, Brazil's adhesion to one of the main cooperation projects launched by China still needs to materialize. One of the main reasons lies in the Brazilian caution about any potential U.S. reactions. When interviewed by English-language Chinese newspaper *Global Times*, Celso Amorim, top foreign policy advisor to President Lula, mentioned that Brazil is still studying the possibility of joining the BRI and that the initiative has had an informal presence in the relationship between Brazil and China for many years.

External influences

The rhetorical and practical changes in how U.S. diplomacy has addressed China's global rise in recent years are striking. With China's growing political and commercial relations in Latin America and the participation of several countries in the region in the BRI, American pressures have taken on a more aggressive character, as illustrated, for example, by the harsh criticism from the U.S. on Chinese investments in Latin America, such as tech titan Huawei's 5G technology implementation projects across the region.

Important Brazilian business sectors also follow, without questioning, narratives such as the one about increasing partner countries'

It is time for Brazil to decisively join the BRI and reiterate its historical alignment with the principles in defense of a multipolar world marked by the primacy of peace, economic development and social justice

XINHUA

Brazilians taste Chinese dumplings during a cultural event in Rio de Janeiro on April 19

economic dependence on China through so-called "debt trap" lending. The same sectors also try to relate the last decades of Brazilian industrial stagnation with the intensification of commercial relations with China. They ignore that the real causes of Brazilian deindustrialization, which started in the 1980s, reside in the high interest rates and submission to a financial system that destroys the national economy and in the corrosion of the federal apparatus generated by criminal privatizations of strategic state-owned companies.

Win-win outcomes

The set of projects involving the BRI complements Brazil's strategic interests. One of the initiative's principal axes is related to investments in infrastructure projects, precisely one of the main economic bottlenecks of Brazil, which annually invests about a tiny 2 percent of its GDP in infrastructure.

Brazil's bilateral relationship with China in recent years has mainly proven beneficial for both countries. It belies the propagandistic accusations of those who seek to weaken Brazil-China ties. In the last decade, Brazil has received 47 percent of Chinese investments in South America. Since 2009, China has been Brazil's leading trading partner, taking over the position held by the U.S. since 1929. In 2022, Brazil's exports to China reached a record $89 billion, according to the United Nations Comtrade database on international trade. The country's trade surplus with China totaled $28.97 billion in 2022, equivalent to almost half of Brazil's total surplus of $61.76 billion.

The BRI represents a large-scale systematization of the concept of win-win cooperation coined by Chinese diplomacy. While respecting the sovereignty and interests of other countries, China is willing to not only expand trade ties but also deepen the range of cooperative initiatives with nations and governments of different hues, regardless of their political beliefs or orientations.

The recent success of China's mediation of the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Middle East demonstrates China's benign role in different regions of the world. While certain great powers continue to export "color revolutions" and covert actions to destabilize governments and nations around the world, China encourages and invests in the expansion of connections and cooperative relations between different regions of the planet.

In a nutshell, it is reasonable to state that it is time for Brazil to decisively join the BRI and reiterate its historical alignment with the principles in defense of a multipolar world marked by the primacy of peace, economic development and social justice, strengthening the benevolent option to build a community with a shared future for humanity. **BR**

The author is a Brazilian commentator on international relations and a Ph.D. candidate in global studies at Shanghai University. This is an edited excerpt from an article first published on the China Focus website
Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
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History in the Making

By Augusto Soto

In his keynote speech at the China-Central Asia Summit on May 19, Chinese President Xi Jinping mentioned Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) envoy Zhang Qian's westward journey from Chang'an—today's Xi'an in Shaanxi Province in northwest China—around two millennia ago. With the mission to open the door to friendship and exchanges between China and countries west of China, Zhang had also featured in Xi's speech on September 7, 2013 at Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev University. Titled Promote People-to-People Friendship and Create a Better Future, it outlined some of the basic principles of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a China-proposed initiative that aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. But what does the reference to an ancient dignitary signify?

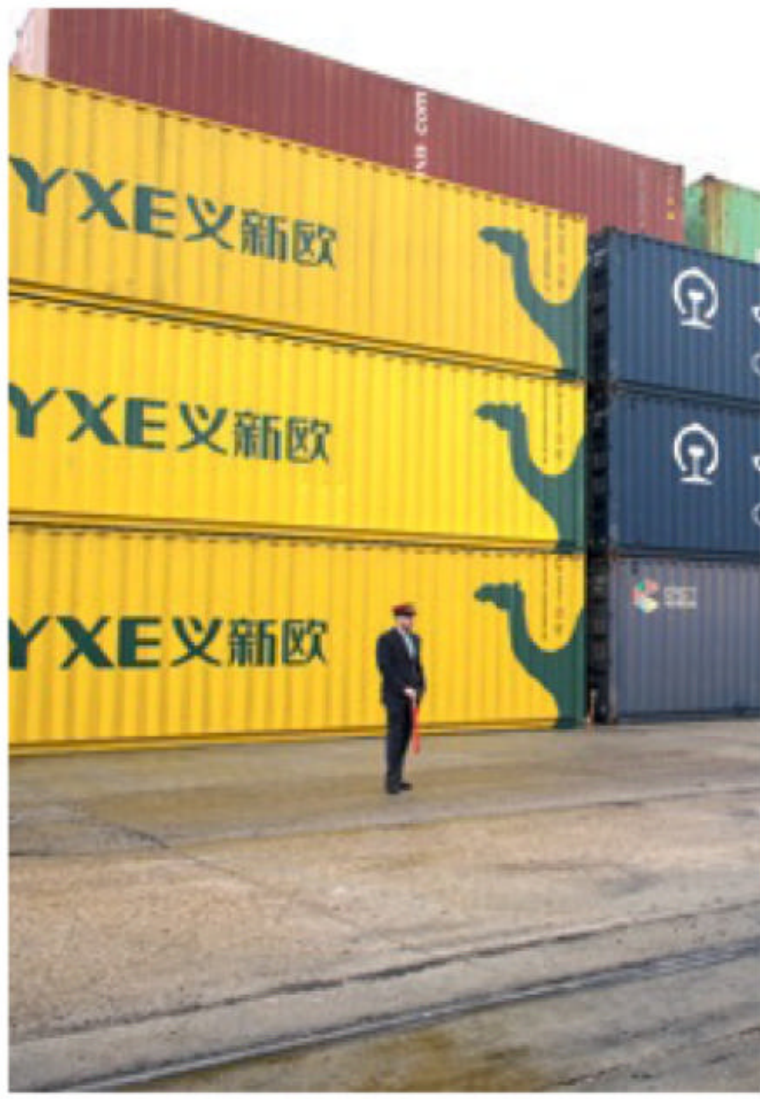
Both speeches resonate throughout Europe today, especially in Spain, the cradle of the Western Hemisphere's second most widely spoken language. On July 1, Spain will assume the rotating presidency of the European Union—a political and civilizational union comprising 27 countries and 24 official languages. Cultural exchanges have played an important role in advancing progress of civilizations for the European region and the world at large, something that merits attention in a year marking the BRI's 10th anniversary as well as half a century of official Spain-China relations. Who could forget that 2014, just one year after Xi's 2013 proposal of the Silk Road Economic Belt in Kazakhstan and the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road in Indonesia, collectively known as the BRI, saw the first train to run on the Yiwu (a city in Zhejiang Province in east China)-Madrid line, which surpasses Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway as the world's longest railway link, arrive in the Spanish capital. What ensued, namely, China's promotion of hundreds of billions of U.S. dollars' worth of infrastructure projects and investments along the Belt and Road routes encompassing Eurasia and beyond, is now a well-known fact.

Two-way exchange

However, one of the initiative's prominent elemental achievements also lies in the dynamic cultural interaction, vision and exchanges it has generated. The proliferation along the routes, both in China and abroad, of museums, cultural exhibitions and other activities, where Chinese tourists and high-ranking officials rub shoulders with locals, testifies to this effect. It is important to reassess the various axial concepts in China's ancestral and contemporary culture that are mirrored in Europe. They range from "to prosper you must first build a road" to "a journey of 10,000 *li* (5,000 km) begins with a single step" to "is it not a joy to have friends coming from afar?" as the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (551-479 B.C.) is quoted as saying in *The Analects of Confucius*, an ancient book composed of a large collection of sayings and ideas attributed to the Chinese philosopher and his contemporaries.

Over the past decade, Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO from 2009 to 2017, has made frequent mention of the contributions the Silk Road has made over millennia to shaping civilizations, catalyzing inventions, fertilizing intellectual scholarship and engendering literary and scientific treasures, not to mention originating traditions and artistic practices that have been inherited across generations.

During his state visit to China in April, French President Emmanuel Macron's meeting with Xi reminded academics of the leaders' previous encounter in 2019, when Macron presented Xi with the original French version of *An Introduction to the Analects of Confucius*, published in Europe in 1688. Macron remarked on this occasion that such early translations had inspired French thinkers Montesquieu and Voltaire, hence influencing two of the main Western



intellectuals engaging in the debate on what constitutes the best form of government. The occasion exemplified a contemporary two-way Silk Road exchange.

In 1999 and 2000, I had the pleasure of lecturing students at the Kazakhstan Diplomatic Academy on China's importance to Europe, on the relevance of learning Chinese and on the foundations of Chinese culture. After Kazakhstan formed official relations with China in 1992, Chinese business people and entrepreneurs established a visible presence in Almaty (Kazakhstan's capital until 1997). But none of my students had been to China. This highly rewarding sojourn made me realize the huge potential of cultural exchanges among countries along the Belt and Road routes and their importance.

In hindsight, this experience taught me two things. First, that Chinese modernization has the power, by learning from the past, to transform the present and future, and to catalyze dreams. And second, that diplomatic academies and schools, such as those in Madrid, Rome and other European capitals, including the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, and certainly those in China, have played a very important role in promoting cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Like dynamic museums housing books on theory and practices, and professors who promote imaginative strategies for understanding and resolving conflict, the more these institutions successfully encompass past and present, the better they can project and plan for the future. Nankai University in Tianjin Municipality, alma mater of the first premier of the People's Republic of China Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), is another example. It is indeed imbued with distinctive university traditions that include a museum. Culture thus matters. It is no coincidence that Eugenio Bregolat Obiols, a three-time ambassador of Spain to China and an honorary professor at the Zhou Enlai School of Government, Nankai University, since 2013, is also a literary man.

Spanish diplomat Luis Francisco Martínez Montes, probably one of today's most enlightened European diplomats and currently posted in Brussels, considered the de facto capital of the European Union, is another distinguished man of letters. In May, he presented his most recent work, *Mundos Illuminados* (*Illuminated Worlds*), a 12-volume global history of Spain, at the Diplomatic School in Madrid. In the context of today's multipolar world, Martínez Montes in this work advocates a common present and future narrative between different civilizations in prominent locations of the Chinese and Hispanic-speaking worlds.

XINHUA

A Madrid-Yiwu train marking the 50th anniversary of China-Spain diplomatic relations departs from Madrid, Spain, on March 9. The line between Yiwu, Zhejiang Province in east China, and the Spanish capital is part of the China-Europe freight train service, a flagship program of the Belt and Road Initiative

Tangible value

A revaluation of the role of cultural exchanges leads us to look at the role of railway connections through different eyes, particularly the significance of the world's longest railway link, the Yiwu-Madrid line. The railroad crisscrosses along China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, France and Spain, and extends to Italy and even Britain.

In November 2018, I was fortunate enough to welcome Zhejiang International Studies University students at the Railroad Museum in Madrid on the occasion of the Yiwu-Madrid line's fourth anniversary, which coincided with Xi's visit to Spain in honor of 45 years of bilateral diplomatic relations. Bearing the banner Yixinou Study Tour, November 2018 (Yixinou referring to the Yiwu-Madrid line) against the backdrop of platforms and tracks displaying old locomotives, Chinese students engaged in lively conversation with local students and people from all sectors of society, including entrepreneurs. Witnessing history in the making was an emotional moment for me.

It was, moreover, tangible. This we see in the waning hegemony of the U.S. dollar in favor of a return to transactions in various currencies between more countries along the Belt and Road routes. In this respect, museums, where art and history coexist, including coins, harbor spaces for dialogue in a world of broader nuances in these multipolar times. **BR**

The author is director of the Spain-based Dialogue With China project. This is an edited excerpt from an article first published in *China Today* magazine
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Unity Makes Strength

By Lan Xinzhen

In April 2022, the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's cabinet, jointly released a guideline on accelerating the establishment of a unified national market. This document called for standardization and consistency in the implementation of regulations across a wide range of industries in China. Although the Chinese market is one of the biggest in the world, it remains relatively inefficient or, as stated in the guideline, it needs to "transition from being big to being strong." Prominent problems such as local protectionism and market fragmentation must be tackled.

The past 12 months have seen the early stages of a more unified national market taking shape. Local policies hampering market unification have been removed through self-assessment. Special actions have been taken to target problems in areas such as market entry and exit, project tendering and bidding, and government procurement, or the procurement of goods and services on behalf of a public authority, such as a government agency. The government has also established a list of behaviors categorized as "improper market intervention," together with a mechanism to rapidly respond to any related problems reported by business entities.

Focusing on fundamental market systems, market connectivity, resource markets, goods and services markets, and market regulation, China is accelerating the formulation of laws and regulations to ensure fair competition and the protection of consumer rights. The country is also continuously modifying its negative list for market access.

The list delineates industries where investment is prohibited or restricted. The 2022 list covered 117 industries, down from 123 on the 2020 list. Another negative list, which specifies restrictive measures exclusively applied to foreign investment, covered 31 industries in 2022, down from 93 in 2017.

A unified national market will also become a key driving force as China pursues a double development dynamic. Also known as "dual circulation," the strategy reorients the country's economy by prioritizing the domestic market (domestic circulation) while remaining open to international trade and investment (international circulation).

Leaving the door open and opening it wider are important given that the country's overall attractiveness is on the rise. For decades, foreign investment has disproportionately flowed to the coastal regions in east China, but thanks to the push for a nationwide unified market, the Chinese market overall is becoming more attractive. The country's central and western regions, in particular, have seen a rise in paid-in foreign investment.

For decades, foreign investment has disproportionately flowed to the coastal regions in east China, but thanks to the push for a nationwide unified market, the Chinese market overall is becoming more attractive

In recent years, the leading role of open platforms has been brought into full play, with prime examples being the construction of a high-level free trade port in the southern island province of Hainan, the creation of national comprehensive demonstration zones for expanding opening up in the service sector in 11 cities including Beijing and Shanghai, as well as a range of state-level economic and technological development zones nationwide.

As the Chinese market is becoming more open and fairer, government regulation has been streamlined. Steps such as amending unfair competition laws have been taken to consolidate the systems that ensure business entities of various kinds can equally participate in market competition. Behaviors that hinder the free circulation of commercial resources will be penalized.

A unified national market cannot be achieved overnight and China still has many hurdles to overcome. Plus, the vast Chinese market is yet to make effective use of global resources. The country still has a lot of work to do in terms of playing a bigger role in global industrial, supply and innovation chains, and better safeguarding economic globalization and multilateral trade. But from company to country, team unity is important for growth. **BR**

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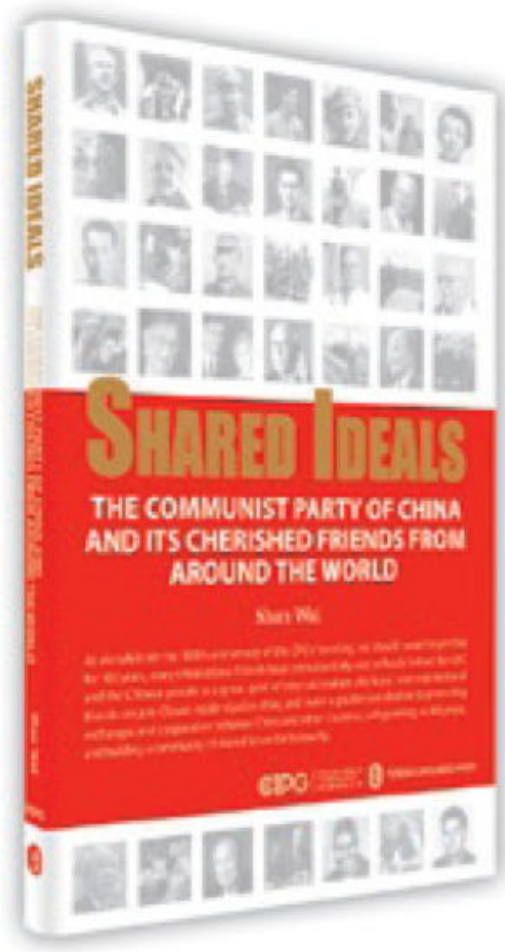
SHARED IDEALS

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA AND ITS CHERISHED FRIENDS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



This book is a collection of uplifting stories of well-known international friends of the Communist Party of China (CPC) over different periods, documenting their lives and particularly their admirable experience in standing shoulder to shoulder with the Chinese people.

A tribute to their contribution, it aims to inspire more international friends to join in China's modernization drive and make a greater contribution to exchanges and cooperation between China and the rest of the world, to world peace, and to building a global community of shared future.

Future-Oriented Relationship

China and Honduras begin a new chapter in bilateral ties By Ma Miaomiao

On March 26, China and Honduras signed a joint communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations. On June 11, an inauguration ceremony for the Honduran Embassy in China was held. On June 12, Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with visiting Honduran President Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

While talking with Castro, Xi said the bilateral relationship has gotten off to a good and speedy start and enjoys great dynamism and broad prospects. "I believe that under joint efforts from the two sides, the China-Honduras relationship will experience sound and steady development, sailing into a bright future," he added.

The first female president of Honduras paid a state visit to China from June 9 to 14. Xi extended a warm welcome to Castro and hailed her visit as one of special significance as it opens a new chapter in the annals of the China-Honduras relationship.

Promoting ties

Back on March 25, the Honduran foreign ministry announced that Honduras was severing its so-called "diplomatic relations" with the Taiwan authorities. The following day, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Honduran Foreign Minister Eduardo Reina signed the joint communiqué following bilateral talks.

A recent Associated Press report said "the ties formed in March were a diplomatic victory for China amid heightened tensions between Beijing and the United States... It also signaled China's growing influence in Latin America..."

The U.S. should welcome positive Sino-Honduran relations, Josef Gregory Mahoney, a professor of politics and international relations at East China Normal University, told *Beijing Review*. Honduras suffers from chronic underdevelopment, violence and destabilizing migrations, for which the U.S. bears some historical responsibility but has an inability at this point to help resolve, Mahoney said, adding that "if China can help Honduras develop through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through increased trade and so on, then this will benefit everyone in the region, including the U.S." The BRI is a China-proposed initiative that aims to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes.

"This new era of China-Honduras relations promises a win-win-win outcome that all should encourage and support," Mahoney said.

The historic meeting between Xi and Castro took place less than three months after the signing, demonstrating the great importance the two sides attach to enhancing ties. Their consensus will inject strong impetus into future bilateral relations, Song Junying, head of the Department for Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, told Xinhua News Agency.

"China will remain committed to developing friendly relations with Honduras, firmly support economic and social development in Honduras, and forge a good friendship and partnership with Honduras featuring mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and common development," Xi said during their talks.

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A Chinese archaeologist with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Institute of Archaeology talks with a Honduran expert at the Mayan site of Copán in Honduras on June 8

XINHUA

Chinese President Xi Jinping hosts a welcome ceremony for visiting Honduran President Iris Xiomara Castro Sarmiento prior to their talks in Beijing on June 12

Regarding the deepening of political mutual trust, Xi said the one-China principle was the primary prerequisite and political foundation for the establishment of diplomatic ties and the development of bilateral relations between China and Honduras, and it is believed that Honduras will act upon it faithfully.

Castro, for her part, said Honduras firmly supports and abides by the one-China principle as well as supports efforts from the Chinese Government to realize national reunification.

China is ready to strengthen exchanges of experience on state governance, share experience in poverty eradication, social governance and corruption punishment, and encourage exchanges and cooperation among governments, legislatures, political parties and subnational sectors, Xi added.

The Honduran side firmly believes that friendly cooperation with China will bring Honduras more and better development opportunities, and the country looks forward to strengthening cooperation with China in such areas as trade, investment, infrastructure and people-to-people exchanges, Castro said.

Exchanges and cooperation between the two peoples were taking place even before the official relationship was established, Han Han, a researcher with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) Institute of Latin American Studies, told *Beijing Review*.

For instance, in 2015, Chinese and Honduran archaeologists initiated a project to jointly decipher the ancient mysteries of the Mayan civilization using the latest archaeological techniques and technologies. Chinese archaeologists first traveled to the Mayan site of Copán in Honduras that same year and have been collaborating on the ongoing project ever since.

The Central American country is well known for being one of the centers of the Mayan civilization, one of the world's oldest civilizations which dates back more than 5,000 years, making the project an effective channel for promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning. Moreover, a new joint archaeological project between China and Honduras is set for 2024, according to the CASS Institute of Archaeology. China will send three archaeologists to Honduras and start the next round of archaeological work.

The Patuca III Hydroelectric Plant in Olancho, Honduras, one of the most modern hydroelectric power plants in Central America, was built by the Power Construction Corp. of China (PowerChina).▶▶

The plant has an installed capacity of 104 megawatts and an average annual power generation of 336 million kilowatt-hours (kWh), meeting around 6 percent of the country's power demand.

Its construction started in 2015 and it was connected to the national grid in December 2020. "The plant has upgraded the country's infrastructure and promoted bilateral cooperation in green energy and technical engineering," Han said.

In 2019, PowerChina was also contracted to build the Arenal hydropower project in Honduras, which is expected to generate 360 million kWh every year and provide electricity to about 1 million residents in three provinces of the country.

Seeking opportunities

"China has been an important trading partner of Honduras since long before the establishment of diplomatic relations, so the fact is that Honduras and China have been working together for a long time," Reina said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

According to the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), trade volume between China and Honduras in 2022 was $1.59 billion, of which China exported $1.56 billion to and imported $29.24 million from Honduras.

Despite their difference in size, the two economies are highly complementary, Song said, adding that cooperation in various fields between the two sides thus enjoys huge potential and broad prospects.

For example, some of Honduras' agricultural products, such as coffee and aquatic products, can now be exported to China more easily and smoothly, he said.

China will promote the early introduction of Honduran specialty products to the Chinese market and is willing to start the negotiation process for a free trade agreement at an early date, Xi said to Castro.

On June 12, the GACC announced that China and Honduras had signed a protocol on inspection, quarantine and other requirements for aquatic products exported from Honduras to China, allowing the entry of Honduras' white-leg shrimp into the Chinese market. Recently, the GACC has given the green light to nine Honduran aquaculture enterprises to register in China for carrying out the trade of white-leg shrimp.

"A stable trade mechanism can lead to broader and more secure cooperation," Han said, adding that Honduras is also looking forward to obtaining new technologies from China to upgrade its agriculture and fisheries.

WEI YAO

Honduran journalists visit the International Press Center of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in Beijing on June 14. Counselor Wang Xiaolin (right) of the MFA's Information Department gifted the delegation selected books from China

Infrastructure in Honduras is also expected to be further improved through bilateral collaboration, as the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly promoting the BRI on June 12.

According to Han, the initiative is an open platform for multilateral cooperation and also helps reduce risks for developing countries. In recent years, a number of landmark early results have been made between China and other participating countries under the BRI framework, she said.

Reina said the BRI will not only benefit the Honduran people with new opportunities for development, investment and infrastructure construction, but also help connect the world.

In her talk with the Chinese President, Castro also expressed the country's willingness to be a member of the BRICS-led New Development Bank (NDB) after she visited the headquarters of the bank in Shanghai on June 11.

The NDB, inaugurated in 2015, has become a new player in financial globalization by supplementing the efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions for global development. Since its establishment, the bank has approved 98 projects in its member countries, with a total investment of about $33.2 billion.

In recent years, China has established diplomatic relations with more LAC countries and set up a number of cooperation mechanisms, which have encouraged other countries in the region to seek cooperation, Han said, adding that pragmatic cooperation with China has led to tangible benefits for these countries.

LAC countries want to be more connected to Asian countries and more emerging markets, Han explained. At the same time, traditional world financial mechanisms usually hold high barriers as well as interest rates. Against the backdrop of the sluggish global economy and trade, the NDB may bring more possibilities for cooperation and growth, she added. **BR**

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Conflict or Consensus

The world needs to adopt a long-term perspective for future development

By Li Wenhan

"It is very dangerous for all the world that large numbers of people in the U.S. have closed their minds and are blind and deaf to the immense changes impacting the world. These Americans have also influenced some Europeans to share this approach," Alistair Michie, Secretary General of the British East Asia Council, warned.

"These attitudes have a great impact. This comes from the reality that the nations of Europe and the U.S. have a dominant grip on global governance. Yet together the U.S. and Europe add up to less than 14 percent of the global population," he said at a book launch hosted by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG) in Beijing on June 13.

As the world faces increasing uncertainties, including climate change, pandemic threats and global regulation of artificial intelligence, Michie called for consensus, not conflict in addressing these problems.

"Through understanding Chinese historical patterns, the people of China can see the value of not being provoked by those that display closed minds in the U.S. and Europe. Chinese readers can learn how many outside China have open minds and seek an intelligent dialogue with all of China," he said.

At the event, David Blair, Vice President and senior economist at the CCG, recalled his own experience. "When the Cold War ended, I thought we were never going to get into the danger of a big power conflict again in Europe or in Asia. But we proved ourselves, or our leaders have proved themselves, to be stupid enough to do that again," Blair said, adding it is important to build a consensus.

Where conflicts come from

The U.S. has been accusing China of violating the so-called "rules-based international order," with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken summing up U.S. sentiments on the issue in a policy speech delivered at George Washington University on May 26, 2022, saying "China's government is undermining the global order that has allowed the country to flourish economically."

A year later, on May 16, Blinken claimed "China represents the most consequential geopolitical challenge that we face today: A country with the intent and, increasingly, the capacity to challenge our vision for a free, open, secure and prosperous international order."

"There is a phrase that we often hear these days, that is, the 'rules-based international order.' It is an ambiguous formulation that is not found in the UN Charter, not in any of the leaders' declarations adopted by the UN, and not in any of the General Assembly or Security Council resolutions," Chinese Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun said at a UN Security Council open debate on international peace and security earlier this year.

Zhang followed with a string of questions: What kind of rules is the so-called "rules-based international order" based upon? Who creates these rules? And how are these rules related to the international order?

"We have yet to hear a definitive, unambiguous answer to these questions. What we have seen instead in reality is how the so-called rules-based approach pursued by some countries has plunged the world into immense trouble and chaos," he noted.

Do China and the United States first agree on the definition of the international order before disputing issues relating to it? "It's easier to understand disagreements over the international order today by first grasping the two approaches to it, the realist approach and the liberal one," Da Wei, professor of international relations at Tsinghua University and Director of the university's Center for International Security and

"The West is losing control, so they believe globalization is dead. It's not."

—Su Hao, Director of the Center for Strategy and Peace Studies at China Foreign Affairs University

Flags fly outside the UN headquarters in New York, the United States, on September 14, 2020

XINHUA

Strategy, told *China Newsweek*.

China refers to the international order as a UN-centric one based on international law. It took shape after the UN Charter was enacted in 1945, enshrining the basic principles of sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs and other principles. "This is basically a realist approach, which deals with relations between nation states by reducing insecurity, power competition and anarchy," Da said.

"The other approach is the liberal international order, a global and rules-based economic and political order established after the end of World War II, led in large part by the United States. As the Cold War ended, the order expanded into a global order, with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other international institutions reaching out to the entire world, fueling globalization," he added.

The future of global order

"The world is undergoing changes unseen in a century—China and the U.S. are involved in great power competition, the future of the Ukraine crisis remains uncertain, and we have been ambushed by the pandemic… These challenges are creating concern over the direction in which globalization is headed," Su Hao, Director of the Center for Strategy and Peace Studies at China Foreign Affairs University, said at the book launch. "There's a Western sentiment that globalization is dead. I partly agree, but the point is what do we mean by 'globalization'?"

"I think it has three stages. The first started with the Age of Discovery when European major powers established their colonial empires to dominate the world and ended as the two world wars were waged. The wave of globalization was characterized by power and authority. The second began after World War II when nations were connected by global institutions, including the UN, the WTO and the World Bank. The West, the U.S. in particular, expanded its global political and financial clout at this stage. However, they are now becoming less able to lead the system."

Su said he believes the third stage is just coming forth. While international relations are in a process of globalization, they are also moving more toward regional integration. Regions including Europe, East Asia, Africa and even North America have developed regional institutions to foster social integration and establish regional communities. More interactions will happen within regions and across regions, meaning each country will have more say in its region than it does in the global arena. "In other words, the West is losing control, so they believe globalization is dead. It's not," he said.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative, a China-proposed initiative to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes. China's trade with countries along the routes rose 19.4 percent year on year in 2022, and accounted for 32.9 percent of nation's total foreign trade, up 3.2 percentage points. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations remained China's largest trading partner that same year, followed by the European Union and the U.S., according to the General Administration of Customs of China.

During the China-Central Asia Summit in May in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, the leaders announced a decision to officially inaugurate the China-Central Asia Summit Mechanism, in which the two sides will take turns to host the biennial summit. China and the five Central Asian countries agreed to promote in-depth cooperation across the board, with priorities given to transport, economy and trade, investment and industry, agriculture, energy, customs, and people-to-people exchanges.

"We need to adopt a long-term perspective in order to gain a deeper understanding of future developments," Su concluded. **BR**

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In Goods We Trust

Small and medium-sized businesses lend economy a resourceful edge

By Zhang Shasha

A truck cabin has two compartments—two seats in the front and a sleeper compartment in the back. The confined space serves as both a workplace and a bedroom for truck drivers, who typically spend more than 300 days a year in their mobile homes.

"Truck designers know how to create the perfect engine and transmission combination, but how many of them have actually tried the sleeper cab? They have no idea just how uncomfortable the original mattress is," Mao Guangyou, founder of a mattress factory in Fuyuan, Yunnan Province, said.

Mao's business focuses on addressing this problem overlooked by office-based designers by manufacturing customized sleeper cab mattresses, a rarely seen service on the market, and selling them on Taobao, tech giant Alibaba's massive online shopping platform. Previously a truck driver himself, Mao was all too familiar with the industry's particular pain point and saw it both as an opportunity for his tiny factory, which only employs six, and a solution to his fellow drivers' roadside torment.

In China, small and medium-sized businesses like Mao's are the "capillaries" of the economy. Their stories prove how China's economic miracle is not only the fruit of grand undertakings, like extensive infrastructure investment, but also the result of unrelenting efforts exerted by the country's *minjian gaoshou* (literally "masters among ordinary folk")—like Mao.

Business and life

Far more than your average cushion, Mao's product is actually a jigsaw puzzle. The primary challenge lies in a precise grasp of different mattress measurements, which vary from truck brand to brand and model to model with different concave-convex angles. When Mao set out on his journey, no such information existed online, nor did truck manufacturers have the data he required.

And so, Mao himself had to go and measure the truck cabins in person, one by one. He recorded the exact dimensions of hundreds of brands and models and then created mattress templates for each and every one of them. At this point it's safe to say that even though Fuyuan does not produce trucks, it does own the most complete truck sleeper cab catalog in all of China.

"I don't have to sleep in a pod anymore," is what many happy drivers have to say about Mao's product. The mattress brand, as implied by its name—Truck Baby, has won the favor of truck drivers all over China and has filled a market gap that had long gone under the radar.

"Small and medium-sized businesses have played a positive role in China's economic development," Hong Yong, an associate researcher with the E-Commerce Institute of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, told *Beijing Review*. These companies create jobs,

(Top)
Shu Wenqing simultaneously cooking and live-streaming from his kitchen in Mianyang, Sichuan Province, in September 2022

Mao Guangyou and his wife inside their mattress factory in Fuyuan, Yunnan Province, in September 2022

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especially in rural areas and small cities, allowing local residents to find work close to home.

Small and medium-sized businesses also meet ever more diversifying consumer needs. And their inherent flexibility allows them to better adapt to market changes and promote greater competition through personalized products and services, Hong explained.

For example, in response to a customer's need to warm up their mattress in the bitter cold of winter, Mao managed to create a temperature control system for his product, in turn upgrading his brand to Truck Baby 2.0.

In Sichuan Province, Shu Wenqing also innovated his business—live-stream cooking on Taobao. At 7:30 p.m. every day, without skipping a beat, Shu goes online to whip up a carefully curated selection of Sichuan dishes. Live-stream viewers based in Mianyang City, Shu's hometown, can then order the freshly made dishes and have them delivered to their doorstep right away.

"People are making money at work—instead of cooking at home, and I make money cooking" is how Shu sums up his business philosophy.

Yi Ge [pseudonym] has his own entrepreneurial wisdom. The young man leads a team of three in selling leftover stock of mobile phone cases online. To keep producing trendy cases, large suppliers need to get rid of excess stock to make room for new ones. Yi smelled a business opportunity.

Yi usually obtains the leftover cases for free and sometimes the suppliers even pay him for taking them. Yi's team will then package them, 10 pieces per parcel, and sell the "blind boxes" on Taobao at 10 yuan ($1.4) per parcel—and delivery is free. Given a single phone case will usually go for more than 10 yuan on Taobao, these blind boxes are definitely a bargain for consumers.

Entrepreneurs like Mao, Shu and Yi all had their own reasons for starting up a business, either out of interest, a sense of responsibility or simply to make a living. But their contributions and resourcefulness are actually an indispensable part of China's economic progress moving on- and upward.

Behind the webpage

Nevertheless, their business success cannot be separated from China's increasingly modernizing business landscape. E-commerce, for one, plays a crucial role.

Hong said e-commerce removes geographical restrictions which helps sellers expand their business. It provides low-cost sales channels and convenient marketing and advertisement tools for them to gain exposure and build up a reputation.

The aforementioned "masters among ordinary folk" all need Taobao to give full play to their business skills, which in turn allows their goods and services to reach more customers.

Meanwhile, the mega platform has provided its eager entrepreneurs with even more possibilities. Its idea to turn their stories into a documentary instantly struck a chord with a filmmaking team famous for recording the lives of ordinary people in China. The collaboration's final product, *In Goods We Trust*, was released on BiliBili, a popular video platform targeting Gen Zs, and video platform Youku in February. It went viral.

As part of the documentary's promo campaign, Taobao introduced an H5 page with delicately designed miniature stores where users could find all the Taobao sellers featured in the documentary. An H5 page is basically a mobile website, mostly a promotional or event-related site, that can be shared on social media platforms. People can then browse through the website with an in-app Web browser.

Pan Heng, producer of the documentary, told *Beijing Review* that the sellers almost turned an instant profit from the documentary and its related campaign. Mao found a potential business partner as well as professional bed mattress suppliers to lift his brand to the next level. The daily number of new followers on Shu's channel grew at a speed 10 times that of before, with 70 percent of new followers placing orders. The day Yi's episode aired, he sold 13,000 blind boxes, according to Pan.

"E-commerce provides ordinary people with an all-inclusive way to expand their business and change their destiny," Pan said. "It brims with imagination and creativity." **BR**

Copyedited by Elsbeth van Paridon
Comments to zhangshsh@cicgamericas.com

A Break in Temples

Temples are becoming a trendy retreat for some Chinese youth

By Yuan Yuan

People have never stopped looking for peaceful places to escape from their anxieties and pressures. Over the past year, working as volunteers in temples has been a popular choice for young adults seeking to experience a very different lifestyle at a super low budget.

Free meals and accommodation, a schedule of getting up early and sleeping early, a peaceful atmosphere, and, if possible, a talk with monks about the meaning of life—all this adds up to a perfect choice for young people seeking tranquility in both the outer and inner worlds at a very low cost.

The new find

A weekend stay as a volunteer at Jingshan Temple in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, served as an interval between two busy trips for travel blogger Zhang Jingshu. Before that, she had just finished an intense trip to Tibet Autonomous Region.

After graduating from Shanghai University in 2020 with a major in filmmaking, she landed a job after graduation but then quit in 2022 to become a full-time blogger.

Before going to Tibet, she had had no connection with Buddhism other than going to pray in temples with her grandmother as a child. "I didn't know anything about Buddhism at that time and didn't understand why my grandma would go to pray," she told *Beijing Review*.

The trip through Tibet was her first real journey of religious exploration. She visited the Potala Palace and Jokhang Temple in Lhasa, and traveled on to Mount Kangrinboqe, a holy mountain in far-western Tibet. She was impressed by the piety of the worshipers there and the immersive experience in Buddhism made her want to learn more about temple life, both for collecting material for her short videos and for her own life experience.

After her trip to Tibet, Zhang applied online to volunteer at Jingshan Temple, a royal temple in ancient times but now one of the lesser-known temples in Hangzhou. She was accepted. The temple only accepts volunteers on weekends and during holidays.

The accommodation at the temple was much better than expected. Zhang and another young volunteer were assigned a standard hotel-style room. This was very luxurious by the standards of temple volunteers as, in most temples, volunteers are required to share a large room.

In the temple, all volunteers are allowed to get up at 4:30 a.m. and join the temple chanting if they want to. Breakfast begins at 7 a.m. After that, volunteers are assigned their tasks for the day. Zhang's was to make coffee in the temple cafe and she learned how to do so from scratch. "Over the weekend, we made hundreds of cups of coffee as tourists swarmed in," she said.

She saw many young visitors in the temple. Figures from Trip.com Group, a major travel booking platform in China, show that the number of tourists visiting temples in the previous five months this year was over three times that of last year. Among the temple visitors, those born after 1990 accounted for more than 50 percent.

"I've heard many friends my age say they want to volunteer in temples but only a small number have actually done so," she said. "This is partly because they don't know how to apply as many temples don't have open channels for application and you need to visit the temples in person to inquire."

The two-day experience marked the start of her exploration of more temples in China, and she intends to visit even more of them and stay in some as a volunteer. "The schedule in the temple helps maintain a healthy lifestyle and provides a break from a life glued to your smartphone," she said.

She now has over 60,000 followers across her social media platforms and temples will be the target destinations of her upcoming trips.

"You can't expect staying in a temple for a couple of days will bring you extra money or a good job offer, but it can help you to view life from different perspectives. This is very important for young people who may be feeling confused or overwhelmed."

—Travel blogger Zhang Jingshu

COURTESY PHOTO

Xu Wansi, a professional based in Beijing, volunteers in the kitchen of the capital's Guangji Temple

Weekend shift

Xu Wansi is more of a "veteran" temple volunteer. A director of TV programs in Beijing, she has been working as a regular weekend volunteer at the capital's Guangji Temple since 2012, when she had just graduated from college. Now, the 34-year-old goes to the temple whenever she has time on weekends.

It is a small temple nestled in one of Beijing's most bustling areas and a short walk from the Financial Street, a major financial center in China. When she walked into the temple for the first time in 2012, she felt nothing but a sense of calm and comfort.

She came across a monk and asked whether she could volunteer at the temple. He took her to another person who was in charge of the volunteers and that was the start of her experience there.

Her job is to serve food and work in the temple kitchen. As the temple doesn't offer any accommodation, she has to drive for half an hour from home and arrive at the temple before 7 a.m. to help prepare and serve breakfast and then help to clean the kitchen and do other chores. She leaves before 8 p.m., after serving dinner.

"Staying and working in the temple makes me feel very calm and all the workers there are very nice," she told *Beijing Review*. "Life inside the temple is very different from that outside. It helps me to put aside daily pressures and gain a sense of relief. This is the reason I like going back there all the time."

Zhang agreed with Xu on the attraction of the temples. "You might be busy and tired physically but will feel relaxed mentally." Regarding some comments that young people go to temples as an escape from real life, Zhang offered another perspective.

"Visiting temples or volunteering at temples might not bring any tangible changes to our lives," she said. "You can't expect staying in a temple for a couple of days will bring you extra money or a good job offer, but it can help you to view life from different perspectives. This is very important for young people who may be feeling confused or overwhelmed."

During her two-day stay at Jingshan Temple, a monk guided the volunteers in meditation at 7 p.m. each evening and answered some of their questions.

One particular thing the monk told her left a deep impression on Zhang. "He said our will is the strongest power," she said. "It reminded me of the movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. I think the power depicted in the movie might be similar to the willpower that the monk was describing. When facing obstacles in the future, I will remember his words. As long as we don't give up, we will find our way through life." **BR**

Copyedited by G.P. Wilson
Comments to yuanyuan@cicgamericas.com

Panoramic Panache

A Russian artist observes and paints Beijing

By Li Xiaoyang

Thirty-something Beijing-based Russian illustrator Liuba Vladimirova loves to catch the sunrise in all its colorful magnificence from a high-rise rooftop or saunter through the *hutong*s, Beijing's zigzag network of traditional alleyways. The combination of these modern and traditional Beijing flavors serves as the source of her inspiration, propelling her to continuously record the city's hustle and bustle with her brushstrokes.

Widely known by her art brand Liuba Draws, she has been living in Beijing for more than 11 years now. Her watercolor paintings starring Beijing's scenery and residents have even generated by-products like postcards, key rings and canvas bags, popular among both the capital's Chinese and expat residents. She also published her new book, *Liuba Draws Beijing*, last November.

For her, Beijing offers a continuous succession of vivid impressions and she expresses her affection for them through painting. "Beijing perfectly combines past, present and future. I enjoy seeing all the little details and inserting them into the paintings, and want to share the beauty of the city with other people," Liuba told *Beijing Review*.

Painting pizzazz

Liuba was born into a Buryat family, a Mongolic ethnic group native to southeastern Siberia, in Irkutsk, the 25th largest city of Russia in population. She participated in an exchange program in international trade and learned standard Chinese during her studies at Liaoning University in Liaoning Province. After graduation, she decided to go to Beijing and follow her passion to become a full-time illustrator and artist.

"I'm a self-taught illustrator. Around the year 2000, I started learning how to paint. After sharing my paintings with my friends, they began asking me to paint something for them. I like to use watercolor because you can create many colors using different paints and it is easy to fix mistakes," Liuba said.

She has traveled to many regions in China, but Beijing remains her favorite place. "I like to go for a walk and see people chatting and children running. Through these details, I get to experience the real soul of the city," she said.

In 2015, Liuba decided to create a calendar featuring typical Beijing elements—as captured through her eyes. That was when she started focusing on portraying Beijing. She has since released *The Beijing Calendar*, which has featured 12 new paintings every year over the past eight years.

"In the beginning, only foreigners bought my calendars. But that's slowly changing. More and more young Chinese are buying them. And I feel like more Chinese people are interested in unique things that are created specifically to represent Beijing," Liuba said.

She has painted many of the capital's hottest spots, including building complexes, the Liangma River and 798 Art Zone, portraying people's daily activities and a sense of vivacity.

Liuba first got the idea to publish a book and share her favorite places in and details about Beijing in 2018. The final product, a collection of the artist's firsthand informative and humorous anecdotes, came out last year. It offers readers a glimpse of Beijing—the old maze-like lanes contrasting with the modern skyline, early bird street food vendors

1. Liuba Vladimirova presents her book *Liuba Draws Beijing* at the PageOne bookstore inside the Beijing Fun shopping complex on February 18

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COURTESY PHOTO

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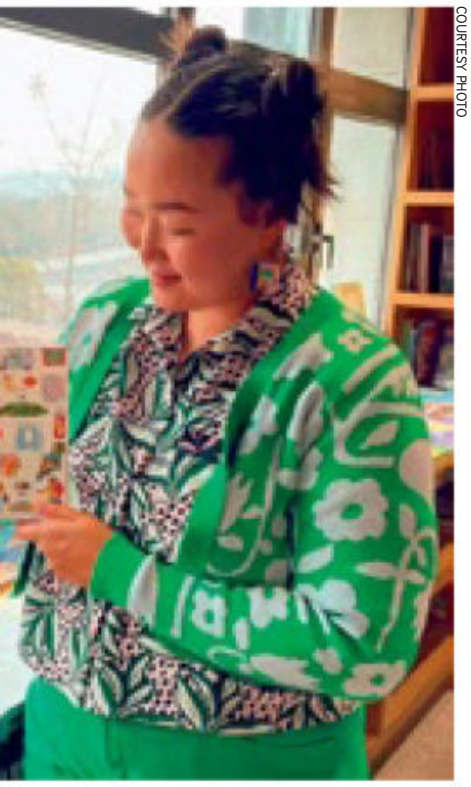
2. Liuba's painting of the view from the rooftop of the M WOODS Hutong Museum, an independent, not-for-profit art museum nestled in Beijing's Qianliang Hutong. A *hutong* is a narrow lane in the traditional residential area of the Chinese capital

3. Liuba's painting of the Liangma River, one of Beijing's most-loved reclamation projects. Its banks today are buzzing with runners, picnickers, fishermen, musicians, social media influencers, and so on



COURTESY PHOTO

and winter wonderland panoramas of the Forbidden City and the Great Wall, to name a few, which are very much unlike the images usually seen in travel guides.

In Liuba's eyes, Beijing is a modern city. "The Beijing subway system is very easy to navigate, super clean and reliable," she said. But tradition has not all faded into obscurity as modernization came along. "In the *hutong*s you can still see and feel the old ways of life, posing a great contrast to the modern parts of Beijing," she said.

"Fast-paced, constantly changing and never sleeping, Beijing might seem like the perfect city for the young and restless, but older folks, too, enjoy it," she wrote in the book. She has captured how Beijing's seniors entertain themselves, with groups of retirees, mostly women, dancing in unison to loud music in parks and senior men usually playing chess and showing off their physical resilience at the ubiquitous outdoor gyms.

Liuba has also introduced distinctive foods of Beijing, such as the *jianbing*, a thin and savory crêpe-like pancake. "To start your love affair with Chinese street food, I recommend this savory snack. It is always prepared on the spot to preserve its crispness, which adds to its huge popularity. Part of the *jianbing* experience is watching how skilled vendors whip up this delicious crêpe in no time right in front of you," she wrote.

Liuba's book is predominantly written in English but some of her explainers are in *pinyin*, the Chinese phonetic system, so that both Chinese and overseas readers can better understand what the artist wants to convey. She hopes that after reading the book, Chinese readers can better introduce Beijing to people from other countries.

COURTESY PHOTO

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Booming with Beijing

Liuba is also very active on Chinese social media platforms such as leading lifestyle and e-commerce platform Xiaohongshu—literally "Little Red Book." "I like to go to all the beautiful and different locations that many people actually don't know in Beijing, and share them on my social media accounts," she said. Plus, the illustrator's dopamine dressing panache featuring bright and well-collocated colors has gained her many fans. Dopamine dressing is the latest style trend to sweep across Chinese social media. As the name suggests, netizens consider this splashy styling a whimsical way to lift their mood amid the pressures of life and work.

"I love new experiences and that's one of the reasons I like Beijing. I have been to many different cities and countries in Europe over the past decade, and I feel like they have seen very little to no change in the 10 years that have come and gone. But here in Beijing, new things are constantly popping up, like new stores and museums. China has developed at a particularly fast speed and has infinite possibilities," Liuba said.

The changes in the capital's environment, too, have impressed her. "The air quality has drastically improved over the past years. I want to proudly introduce the colorful city I've come to know and love instead of the gray Beijing so very often portrayed," she said.

According to Liuba, Beijing has had a huge impact on her life and personal development. "The metropolis and its people taught me to be patient, expect the unexpected, find joy in the little things, forget about the bad, appreciate what I have, constantly be curious and strive for new experiences," she noted in the book.

Although not sure about her future in Beijing, Liuba feels she has developed close ties with the city. "Beijing and I grew and developed together as partners. Even if Beijing and I decide to break up at some point, I think the city will remain a dear friend whom I'll visit often and give a call sometimes to stay in the loop and find out what's new," she said. **BR**

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A Man of Many Faces

Cuban performer attracts loyal following in China By Magdalena Rojas

Moving to China was not only a professional turning point for Liubin Lima, but also a challenge that led him to explore new horizons to win the hearts and smiles of the public.

For the Cuban artist and performer, China did not even appear on his radar when he was young. "I saw it as something impossible and far away," he said.

In fact, many of his friends and classmates went to China after being selected by recruitment agents for dance performances, according to Lima. As he had only basic training as a dancer, he never joined his friends at dance auditions. However, fate had a surprise in store for him. In April 2019, he was hired to incarnate different characters as a performer at Hefei Sunac Land, an amusement park located in Hefei, capital of Anhui Province. "This was a very special place for me because it was where I had my first encounter with Chinese culture and where, in a way, I had to mold myself in order to mingle," he said.

Growing up among artists

Lima has had extensive training in the plastic and visual arts, having been born into a Cuban family of artists that pushed him down this path from an early age. "They say this is something you are born with, but obviously family plays an important role in the development of skills," he said. "They, along with some teachers, saw [these abilities] in me and helped me develop into who I proudly am today."

On his father's side, Lima has distant relatives who are musicians, some of whom are even part of the front lines of Cuban music. At the same time, his mother's side has teachers and writers with a wide repertoire of drawing and painting, whose illustrations appear in various books. It didn't take long for Lima to immerse himself in this artistic universe and for seven years he

Liubin Lima performs for a group of children in Hefei, Anhui Province

COURTESY PHOTO

studied the piano, while simultaneously learning how to draw from his relatives and embarking on professional dance training. The theater finally came knocking in 1999, when he was in his teens and, since then, his face and body have been covered in makeup and outlandish costumes to bring to life many characters.

A style adaptation

In Cuba, Lima worked in a children's theater troupe that used various techniques to simultaneously educate and entertain. Despite his strong performance experience, he discovered the sense of humor and the acting itself were very different in China, which was a challenge initially. "It was a bit difficult for me to adapt to other energies, customs, codes and such different verbal and nonverbal languages," he explained.

For this reason, he leaned on his coworkers, who quickly became a kind of family. "I made many friends on the team and I outlined a strategy," he said. "I helped them by sharing my experiences and they taught me their ways and codes to enable me to reach such a different market."

During the two years Lima worked in Hefei, he portrayed many different characters or "clowns," as they would say in artist slang, as well as participated in dance shows.

Back on stage

When Lima's contract with Hefei Sunac Land was about to end, he found out that auditions were being held to be part of a renowned circus in the city of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. At that point, he was 38 and did not know if he was up for the challenge. However, his friends encouraged him to audition, believing he had the talent and met the requirements. As he was scheduled to audition just two days later, Lima did not have the time to prepare a routine from scratch. He had no choice but to rely on his past experiences.

"On my way to Hangzhou, I remembered a performance I'd staged five years earlier and figured that might be suitable. I also prepared some elements and moves that could serve me in the moment," he said.

His audition had been set for the afternoon but was unexpectedly moved forward to the morning, immediately after a group of dancers. Lima still remembers how nervous he was that day. Even so, he plucked up his courage and jumped on stage ready to give it his all. "I tried to be charming and, above all, to have fun—as always," he said.

His friends had been right. Lima's performance went over well with the judging panel, who then invited him to come watch the *X Show Hangzhou* created by Canadian circus producer Cirque du Soleil. Among all the actors and characters on stage, one captivated the Cuban from the get-go. In addition to being one of the protagonists, this character possessed an energy that resonated with his own style of artistic interpretation. "Some time later they told me that I had been approved for the circus and that my character would be Khino, the one I couldn't take my eyes off throughout the show," he said.

Lima said Khino has a lot to do with the references that he himself had used for the creation of Michiflio, a character he created in Cuba. In addition, upon the request of the directors, he also frequently embodies the antagonistic character or other roles. "The fact I perform as several characters forces me to study each move so that they have a personal and distinctive stamp," he said.

His day usually revolves around the show, so at 5:30 p.m. he is in makeup, at 7 p.m. everything is ready and at 7:30 p.m. the curtain is raised to start the unforgettable *X Show Hangzhou*, which incorporates elements of renowned international circuses as well as maintains an aesthetic deeply rooted in East Asia and China in particular.

For Lima, being part of the *X Show Hangzhou* has been a great achievement. "Returning to the stage in a totally different and demanding role represents personal growth, not only because of the majesty of the theatrical installation, the megaproduction or the virtuosity of the circus actors whom I am proud to work with, but also because it is a different role that requires more from me as a professional," he said.

For that same reason, Lima takes his job very seriously. He continually tries to improve himself by reviewing show recordings to hone his moves, and he works out to stay in shape. "That meeting with the public that comes in to see a show forces you to give them everything so that they can take home an unforgettable experience," he said. **BR**

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SPRING BUD PROJECT

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1

The Eternal Light

Ancient Greece and Rome are recognized as the cradle of Western civilization. The Naples National Archaeological Museum in Italy is home to the world's most extensive collection of ancient Roman sculptures and frescoes from the ancient city of Pompeii, buried and preserved by an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79. Some of the museum's world-renowned masterpieces are now on display in an exhibition titled The Light of Ancient Roman Civilization, on show at the China World Art Museum in Beijing, from June 10 to October 8.

Through nearly 70 groups of ancient Roman artifacts, including sculptures, frescoes, bronzes, glassware and other art categories, the beauty of ancient Rome is on show for the Chinese public. **BR**

(*Text and photos by Kang Caiqi*)

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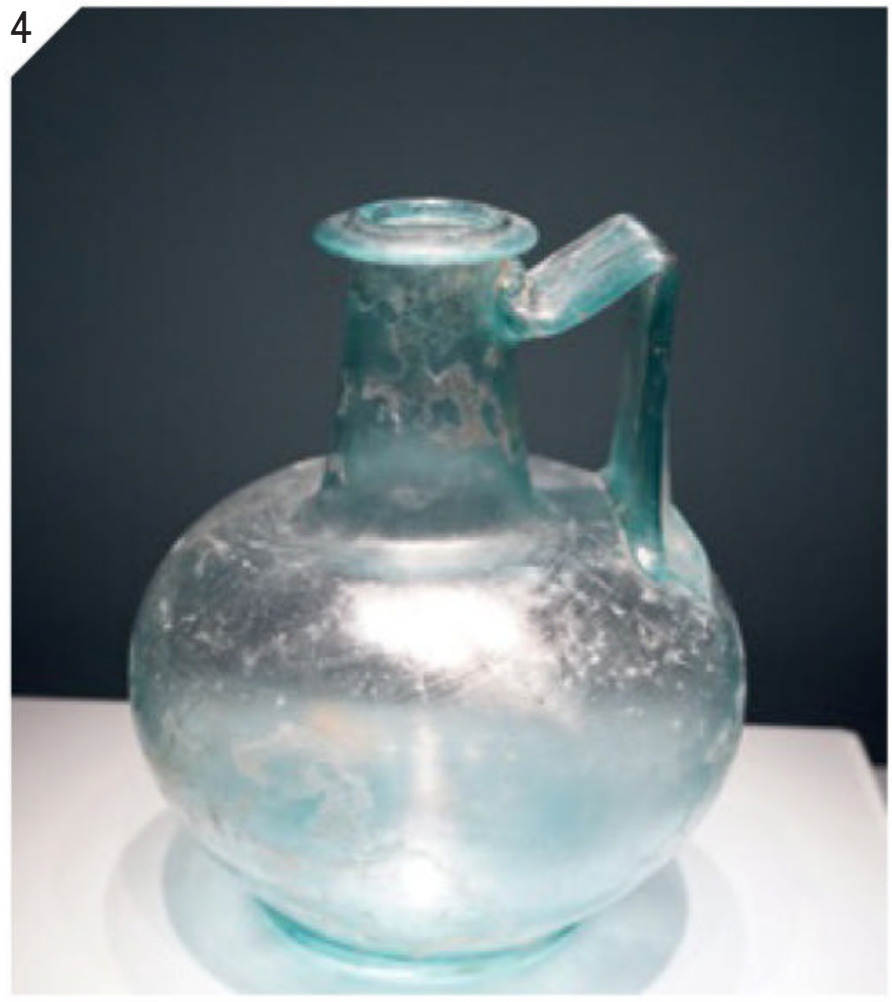

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1. A marble sculpture called *Crouching Aphrodite With Eros* created in the second century, replicating the sculptural style of Praxiteles, the greatest of the Attic sculptors of the fourth century B.C. The modeling of this sculpture was commonly used to decorate the gardens of villas and palaces in the Roman period

2. *Pseudo Seneca*, a Roman bronze bust of an unidentified high-ranking person, dating back to the late first century B.C.

3. *Mosaic With Lion and Dionysian Procession*, a mosaic fragment unearthed in 1829, depicting the interior of a temple of Dionysos, the god of winemaking in ancient Greek mythology

4. A 2,000-year-old glass pitcher unearthed from the site of Mount Vesuvius

5. A 2,000-year-old Pompeii fresco of Narcissus, a well-known character in Greek mythology, who is the origin of the term "narcissism," or a fixation on oneself

Caught in the Act or the Court of Public Opinion?

Hu Jiyong, a top official at a subsidiary of state-owned China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC), was removed from his positions after a video that showed the 50-something man allegedly having an extramarital affair with a young female colleague had Chinese social media abuzz in early June. The woman he was captured holding hands with during a trip to Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province in southwest China, was also dismissed. Investigations are still ongoing at the time of writing.

Taikoo Li Chengdu, the shopping complex where the pair was caught on camera, reiterated that the complex prohibits unauthorized commercial street photography. Given that the video was first posted by a street photographer, some people now have serious concerns about street photographers violating people's privacy. This type of photography/videography, showing people going about their daily lives, has grown increasingly popular on Douyin, China's version of TikTok, and popular lifestyle and e-commerce platform Xiaohongshu.

Zhou Xueze (*Dazhong Daily*): In the digital era, the Internet is an important platform to supervise public employees. While the privacy of ordinary people comes with strict legal protection, said employees must subject themselves to public supervision. In this sense, the street photographer did not violate Hu's privacy.

Public employees include those who are employed by state-owned enterprises. As executive director, Party committee secretary and general manager of a Beijing-based CNPC subsidiary, known as Huanqiu Project Management, Hu falls into the category of personnel subject to public supervision.

The photographer who posted the video online is an influencer well known for his photos and videos shot along this bustling Chengdu area. He said he'd accidentally captured the two people walking hand in hand and had obtained their consent before continuing to shoot the video.

When their misconduct occurs in the public sphere, public employees must and will be subjected to supervision. Their rights to individual privacy will then become secondary.

Sun Weifei (ThePaper.cn): The street photographer did not secretly obtain the footage but had obtained the pair's consent. The question now is whether the two had agreed to the photographer posting the video online. Even if one is allowed to photograph or film a person, this does not necessarily mean they have permission to publicize the imagery captured. The distribution of certain images can easily have serious consequences, particularly in the digital age. It remains unclear whether the two agreed to having the video posted on the Internet.

The behavior of public employees can affect national interest. So the degree of their privacy protection depends on specific situations. If they are suspected of engaging in criminal activity, it's unnecessary to blur or pixelate their faces to protect their privacy and identity.

In the case of Hu, even if in the name of supervising a state-owned enterprise executive and his rumored mistress, whether their video can be put online without blurring their faces remains debatable. It's better to lodge a complaint indicating moral misconduct to the disciplinary inspection authorities rather than directly posting their video online. After all, nobody can tell with any certainty if his suspected extramarital affair will directly result in the losses of state-owned assets. But it is certain that his personal reputation and his family will be seriously affected by recent events. His alleged love affair is a private matter.

Anti-corruption investigations triggered by alleged affairs are usually hit-or-miss. An over-reliance on these types of incidents to uncover corruption may satisfy curiosity, but an effective supervisory system for public employees is more important. **BR**

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Beijing Review Vol.66 No.1 January 5, 2023 Kindle Edition

by Beijing Review (Author) Format: Kindle Edition

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Beijing Review **is China's only national English newsweekly published by China International Communications Group Center for the Americas.**

Product details

ASIN : B0BTKKP3G4
Publisher : Beijing Review (January 5, 2023)
Publication date : January 5, 2023
Language : English
File size : 1396 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
X-Ray : Not Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Sticky notes : On Kindle Scribe
Print length : 90 pages

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Website: www.chinahoy.com.cn